DEFENDER
STERANKO

CRUSADER COMMENTS

The dynamic figure you see below is a re-inked drawing of THE DEFENDER from the cover of COMIC CRUSADER #5. It heralds the fantastic concluding chapter of the Defender saga, "Terror At The Top Of The World!" Now some of you will spot a few swipes in this story. Please don't waste your time writing me nasty letters about them. Instead, enjoy the story and the way I utilized them.

This issue's second blockbusting strip is by STEVE DITKO. Steve originally did it for a school newspaper. When plans for its printing fell through, Steve asked if I might like to publish it. Since I believe Mr. A to be one of the most thought provoking characters around today, I jumped at the chance. I hope you enjoy it and I thank Steve for alowing me to print it!

In an era when more and more fanzines sport fantastic covers, there is none more fantastic than the one JIM STERANKO has rendered for this issue! Thanks Jim!

It takes an unusual man to write an unusual article. A "13" article for a "13th" issue is such an article and such a man is TOM FAGAN! I'm sure you'll enjoy his article on 13 oriented comic characters.

This issue, a 75¢ price goes into effect. Higher printing costs and an increase of 3rd class postal rates force this price change. I hope you'll continue to support this top zine for under $1.00!

My thanks to Gil Kane, Bill Black, Wayne Pond, Anthony Kowalik, Joe Staton and Ron Fortier for their help in putting this issue together. Read and enjoy, my friends. More is on the way! Best - MARTIN L. GREIM

COMIC CRUSADER is published and © 1972 by Martin L. Greim - Box 132 - Dedham, Mass. - 02026. Price: 75¢ per issue.

Martin Greim
Presents....

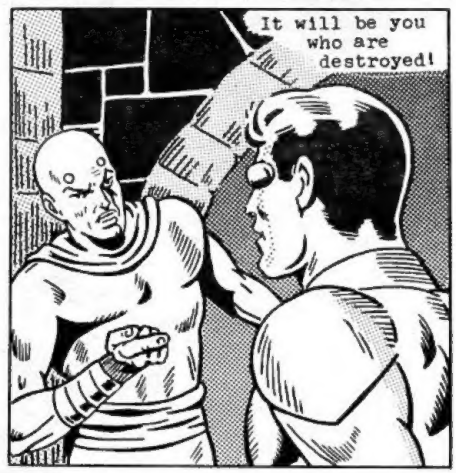
DAVID MANNING

The Defender

Legend

The Defender learns from Brawn and Queen Jolene that The Ruler is coming to Earth to personally mastermind its conquest!

Using his teleporter, The Defender transports himself and Brawn to The Ruler's Himalayan headquarters. They split up, in an attempt to gain entry and after a small battle, The Defender succeeds. Suddenly, he is surprised by The Ruler, who is holding a gun over Brawn's unconscious form. The Ruler moves in, as his troops arrive!



The Ruler's men swarm over him so quickly, that The Defender is unable to utilize his weapons belt and is soon felled by a Myphestian war club.

David! Come on! Snap out of it!

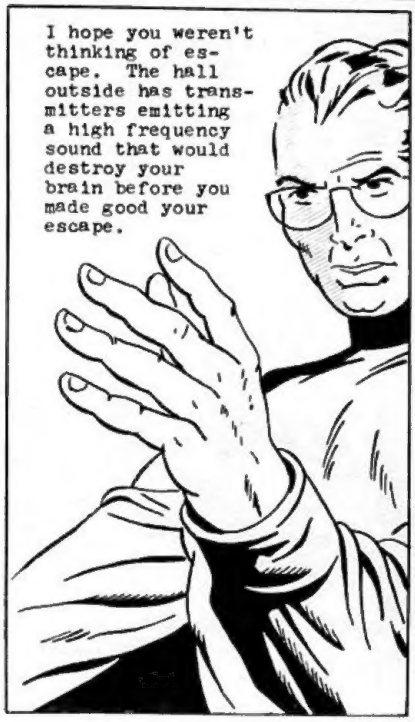
Searing pain clears The Defender's vision, as he struggles to his feet.

Brawn, where are we and who's he?

I can answer for myself! I'm C.C. Fagan, head of Fagan Enterprises and a prisoner here, just like you.

The Ruler's men attacked and took me prisoner, when I came to check on a salt water conversion experiment, being conducted by my scientists off the coast of India.
And you! I recognize you from the papers. You're that alien General Westman's after.
Don't believe everything you read, mister. Westman has a habit of trying to pound square pegs into round holes.

The Ruler capped my weapons belt!


I hope you weren't thinking of escape. The hall outside has transmitters emitting a high frequency sound that would destroy your brain before you made good your escape.

Although I was rendered helpless by gas, and couldn't move to aid you, I heard you and The Ruler speak as though you had met before.

Yes. The Ruler and I are acquainted!

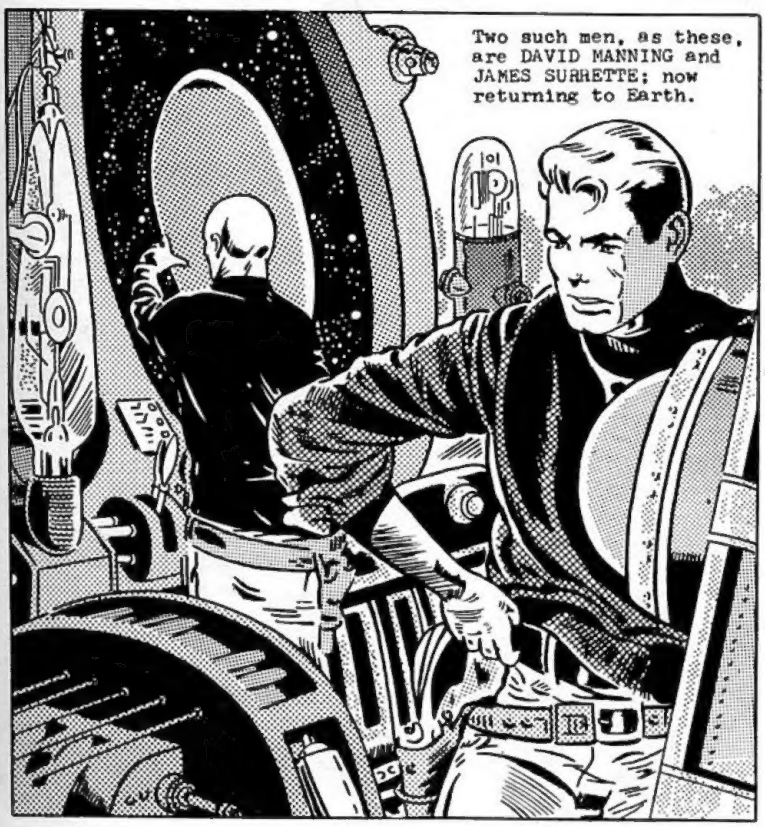
The Defender says no more on the subject; but as the others try to formulate a plan of escape, his thoughts wander to the first time he ever encountered James Surrette, The Ruler, in the year....

3961

3961, a time when man has reached the stars...a time when new cities of gleaming alloys and crystal glass reach high into the sky.

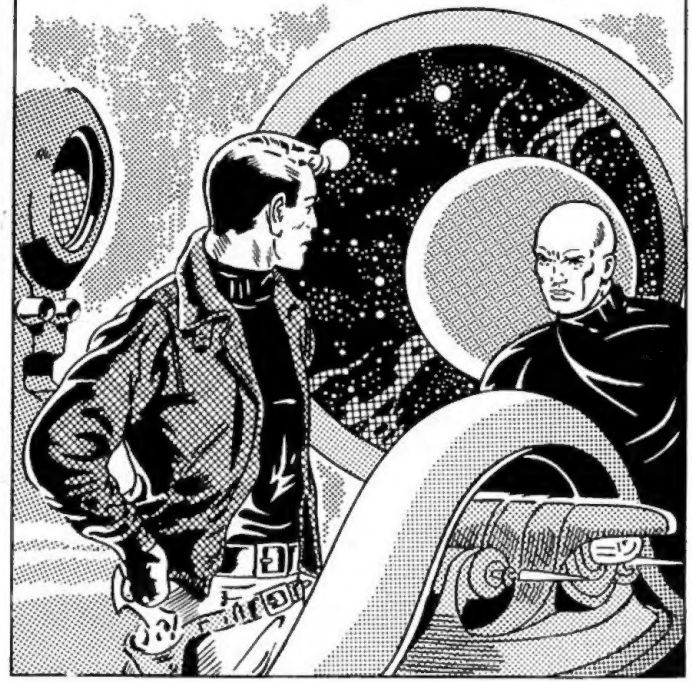
But, it is also a time when man has become increasingly passive!

Very few explore new worlds; and those that do, are either fortune hunters or adventurers.

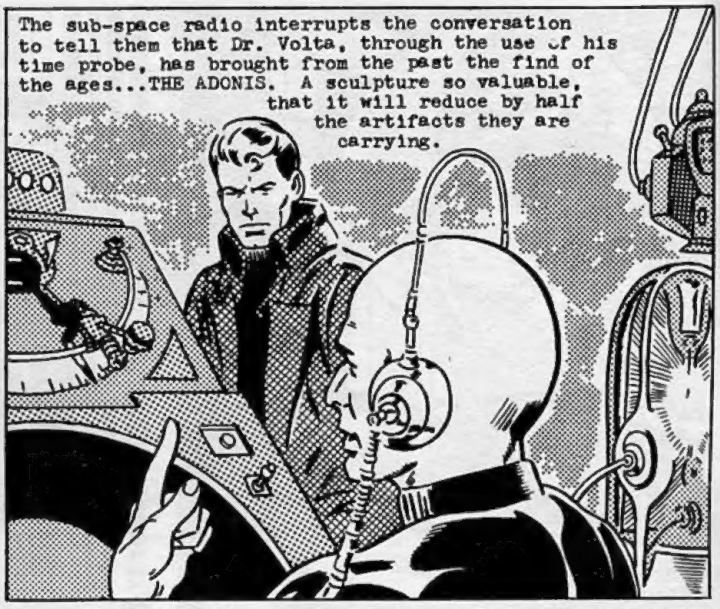


Two such men, as these, are DAVID MANNING and JAMES SURRETTE; now returning to Earth.

You really get a kick out of this, don't you Manning? Space holds a thrill for you, rather than the lure of wealth that drives me. Well, after a few more trips like this, gathering artifacts for the Galactic Science Center, and I'll have enough credits to give me a start toward great wealth and power!

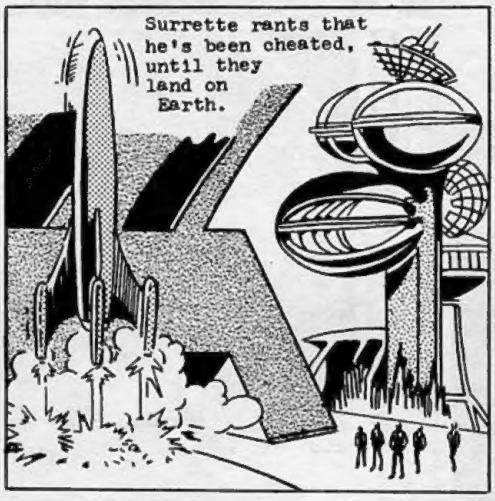


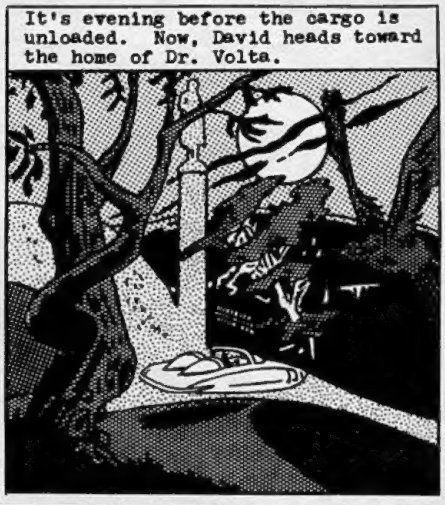
Is that right! Well, I'll tell you; I like money as well as the next guy, but in a world where every member of a family is tranquilized into bland normality, where "hate" and "fight" are the dirtiest words in the language, and where computors run everything, right down to programming sex periods....space is the only answer!

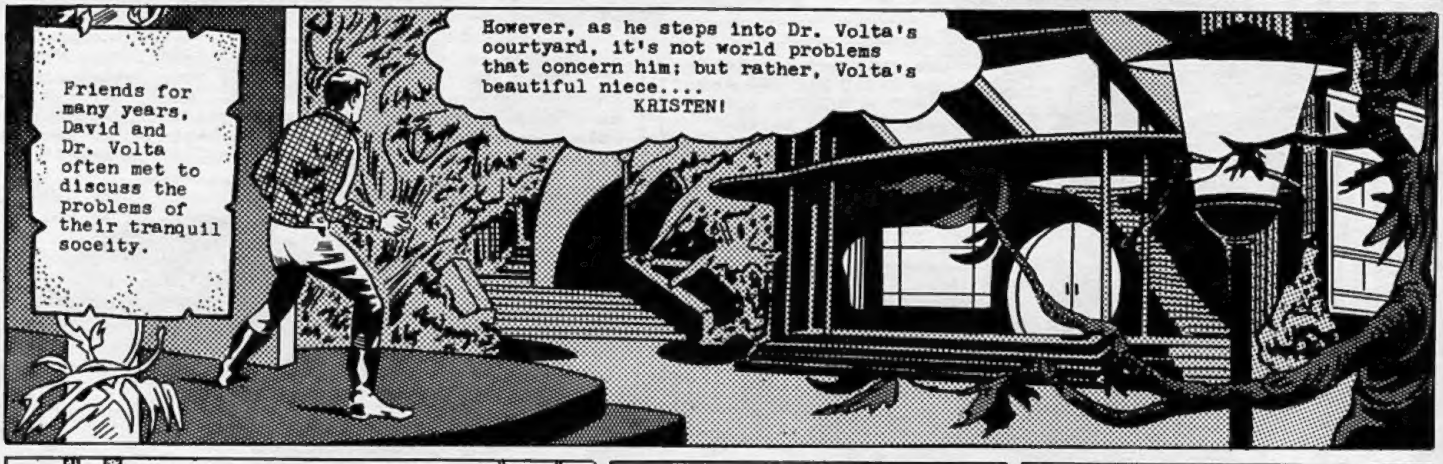

The sub-space radio interrupts the conversation to tell them that Dr. Volta, through the use of his time probe, has brought from the past the find of the ages...THE ADONIS. A sculpture so valuable, that it will reduce by half the artifacts they are carrying.

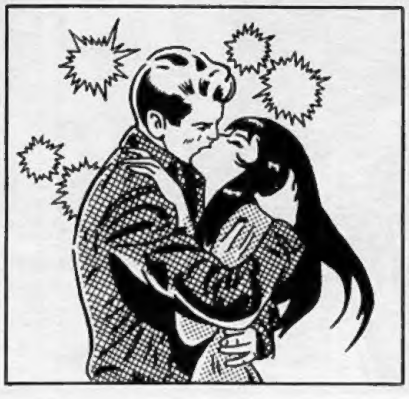
Scientists in the year 3961, through use of a time probe, are able to bring lost art treasures of the past to the future. There, they reproduce the object and the original is sent back to the exact second in time from which it was taken. In this way, the people of that era never miss the object.

Just such an object is THE ADONIS!






Friends for many years, David and Dr. Volta often met to discuss the problems of their tranquil soceity.
However, as he steps into Dr. Volta's courtyard, it's not world problems that concern him; but rather, Volta's beautiful niece....
KRISTEN!



Dr. Volta! Congratulations on retrieving The Adonis.
Thank you, David. It's good to see you again.
Finding The Adonis would have been so much easier, had I been able to send a man back to search for it.
Still haven't solved that problem, eh.
No! Every animal I send into the past undergoes a molecule change that kills them. It seems that the time probe can only transmit inanimate objects.
Uncle Kurt, why don't I get The Adonis, to show David. I'm sure he'd like to see it.
Alright, dear. It's in the time probe room.
Tell me, Doc, how've things been, while I've been away? Have people begun to accept Kristen as one of them?
I'm afraid not, David. Bigots of our world, distrust the fact her mother was a Venusian and that she has a sixth sense.
WHAT - ?!
EEEE!

Kristen's scream instantly brings David and Volta to the probe room. David steps forward and throws open the door!
He sees it for only an instant - Then it is fired!
A ray-gun! Outlawed, to all but space explorers, its blast throws them stunned across the room!
Unable to move, David sees Kristen lying on the probe's transmit panel.
He sees a hand turn a dial, then push a button.
The probe is activated and Kristen is gone!
Now The Adonis is mine!
ATTACK!
It was Surrette! Summoning all his strength David gets to his feet to....

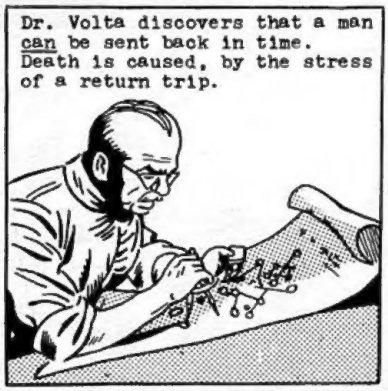
Though in agony, David lashes out with uncontrollable fury.
He presses the fight onto the transmit panel. But the ray blast he received finally takes its toll and....
A well placed blow knocks him to the floor.
Recovering his gun, Surrette screams..."I won't waste time sending you back in time. I'll blast you to atoms!"
Unnoticed during the fight, Dr. Volta is now at the time probe's controls.
SURRETTE TURNS, BUT TOO LATE!
YAAAH!

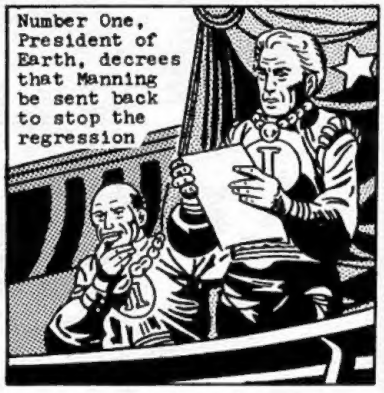
Surrette was gone--- dealt the same horrible fate as Kristen. Dr. Volta and Manning thought them both dead until about 3 months later....

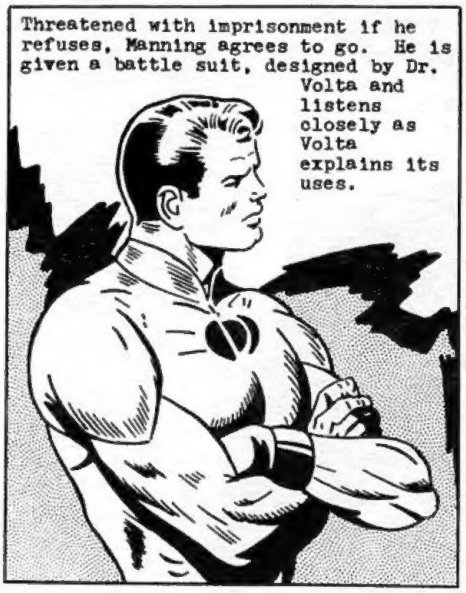
Violence came to 3961!

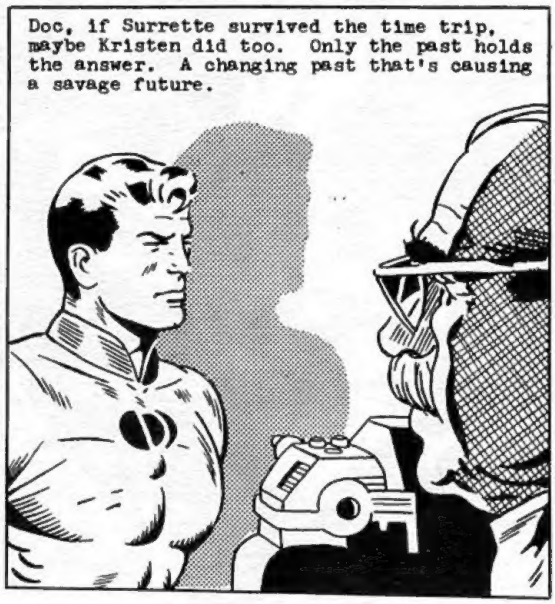
It was soon learned, through use of the time probe, that Surrette had survived the time trip and now, known as The Ruler, his evil was changing history and causing a regression in 3961!

The past was not without its defenses. Heroes, like SPACE GUARDIAN, came forth to fight the Ruler's menace.


Dr. Volta discovers that a man can be sent back in time. Death is caused, by the stress of a return trip.


Number One, President of Earth, decrees that Manning be sent back to stop the regression.


Threatened with imprisonment if he refuses, Manning agrees to go. He is given a battle suit, designed by Dr. Volta and listens closely as Volta explains its uses.


Doc, if Surrette survived the time trip, maybe Kristen did too. Only the past holds the answer. A changing past that's causing a savage future.

And so, David Manning is sent to fight an evil centuries before his birth.

It might help, if you offered a few ideas on how we might escape from here!
The Defender's thoughts return to the present, but before he can answer Brawn a figure appears in a flash of energy.
Beaten the Ruler yet, boys?!
Jolene! How in blazes did you get here?
I beamed down from my space-craft, after tracing your exact position with its sensors.
Jolene takes a small weapon from her belt and says: "I best remove that cap from your belt David, as I'm sure both I and my spacecraft must be detected by now!"
And detected they are, as the Ruler's soldiers mobilize.

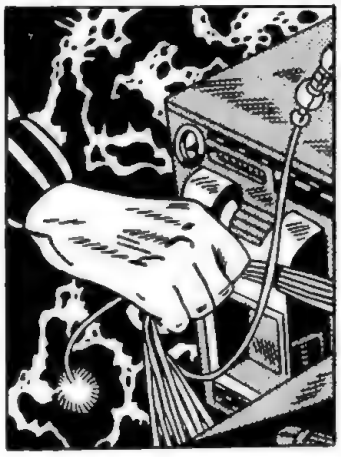
Now that my belt is free, I'll get us out of here.
But to use that door means death!
Now really C.C., who said anything about using a door?!
Hurry! you must return to your ship.
Return to the ship, when we're this close to the Ruler! Not in your life!
Look Brawn, I'll take care of the Ruler! Your duty is to your queen. Get her and Pagan to safety. Besides, I'll stand a better chance here alone!
One more thing, even if I'm not out, in fifteen minutes open up on this place with everything you've got!

As Jolene, Fagan and Brawn beam up to an orbiting space craft, the Ruler's gun crews prepare for battle!
Hail Sire! There is no sign of the intruder yet!
Well find him! Nothing must interfere with "PROJECT AQUARIUS". At last, with the aid of the rare components we forced our prisoner C.C. Fagan to procure for us, I can now control the oceans of the world!
I'll check on the spacecraft myself!
But why concern yourself with the spacecraft? If it comes within range, our computer controlled guns will unfailingly lock onto it and destroy it.
THE COMPUTER IS DEAD!

Yeah! And this guy isn't in such great shape either!

Manning! You're free!

Right! And I bet you can hazard a guess on what happened to your computer.



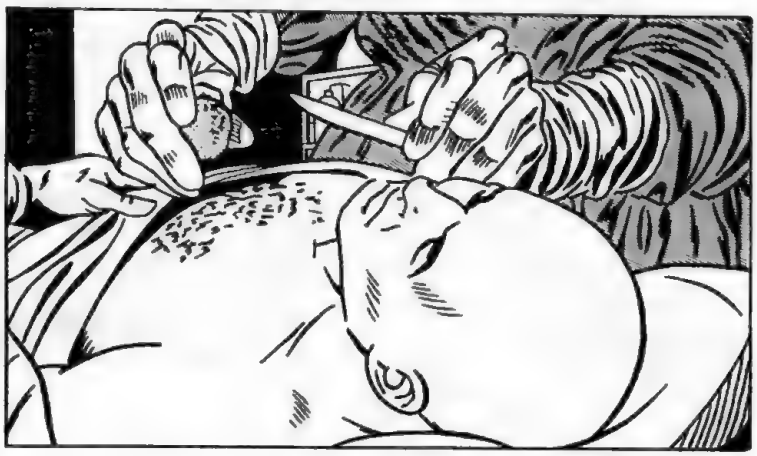
Don't be a fool, Manning! Join me. So what if our time is regressing. After all, you were always preaching how passive it was. Now, we two from the future can rule a universe!

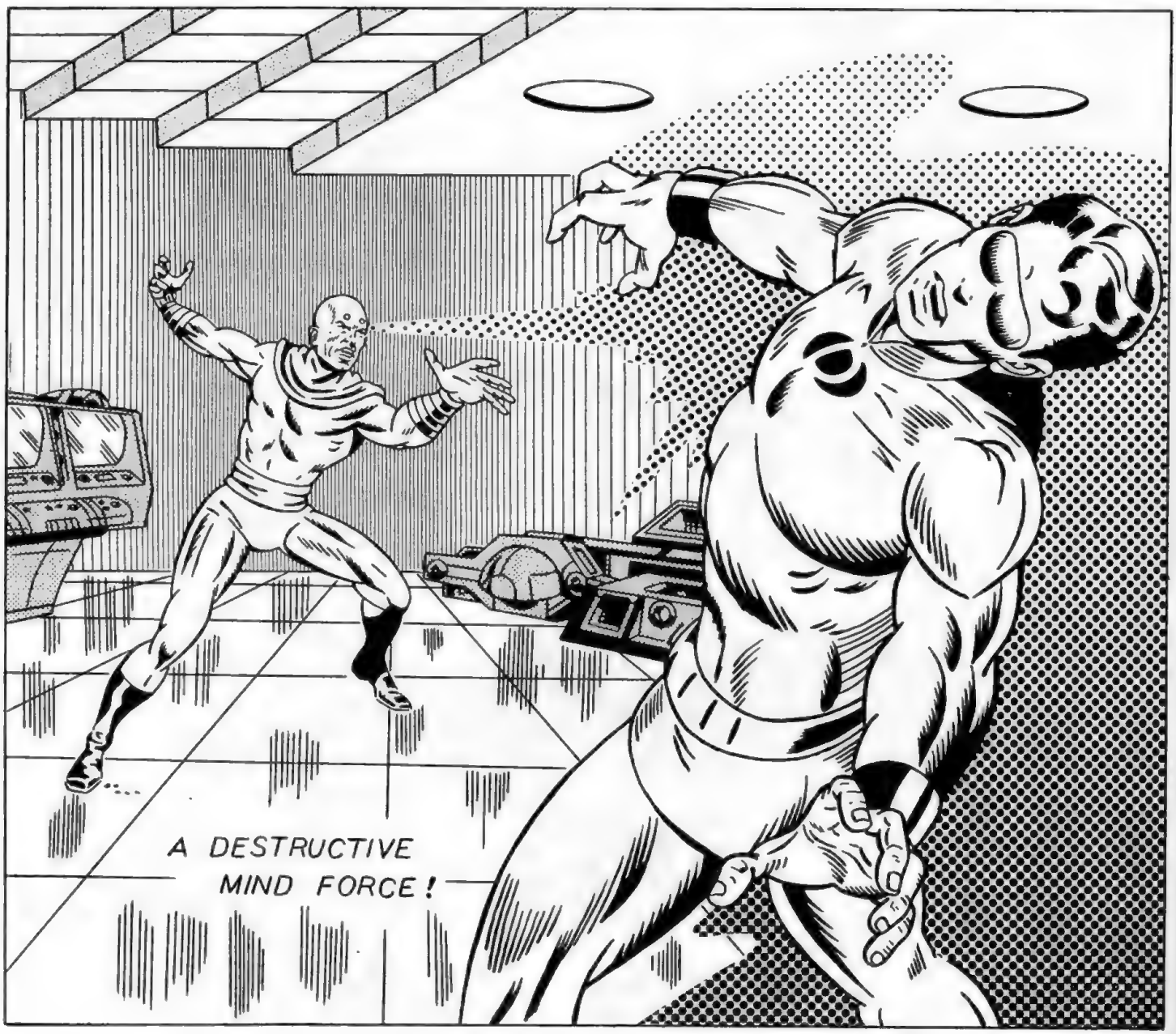
Forget it! I want no part of a universe of barbarism. Then too, there's the matter of Kristen to be settled!

Alright then - Die, damn you, die!

ZIP
You'll have to do better than that, to stop me Ruler!
THROW
A whole lot better!
You've created chaos in this time - brought about great turmoil in our own - perhaps destroyed the girl I love - and tried to take my life! Now, you maniac, your moment is at hand!

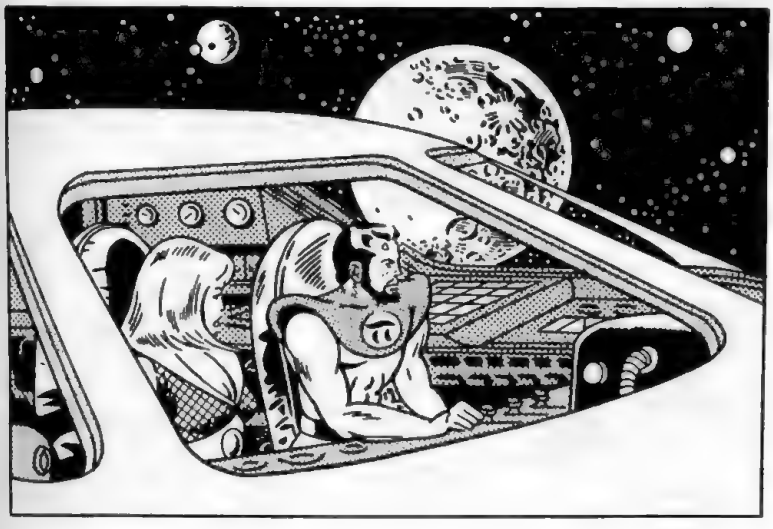
After my untimely arrival in this era, I stole certain radio parts and created a sub-space transmitter. With this, I contacted the most war like race of this time, The Myphestians. They brought me to their planet, where I instructed them to place two discs in my forehead. It was through these discs that I became their ruler! A ruler that led them on a path of conquering destruction, unequaled anywhere in the galaxy! Though it taxes me terribly and I can only use it for short periods of time, the discs give me the power of.....

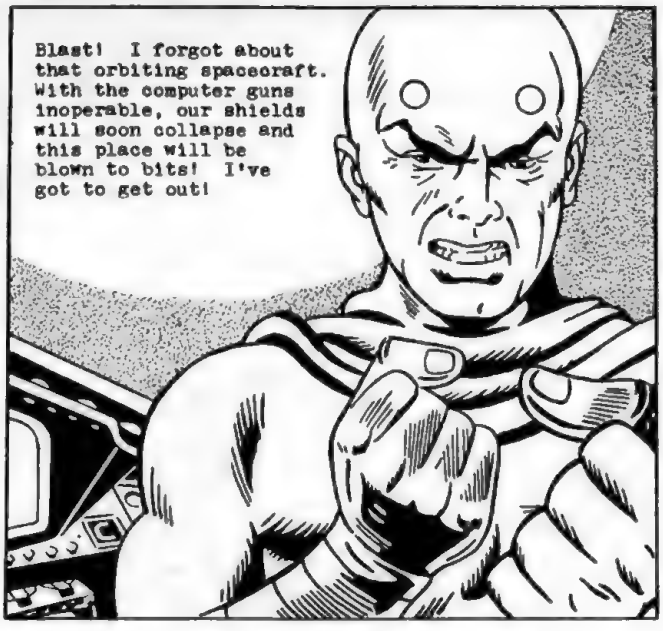


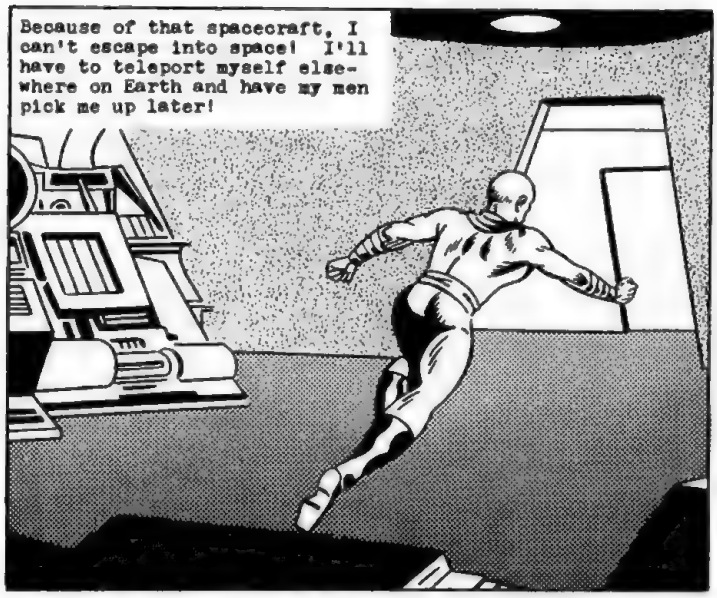


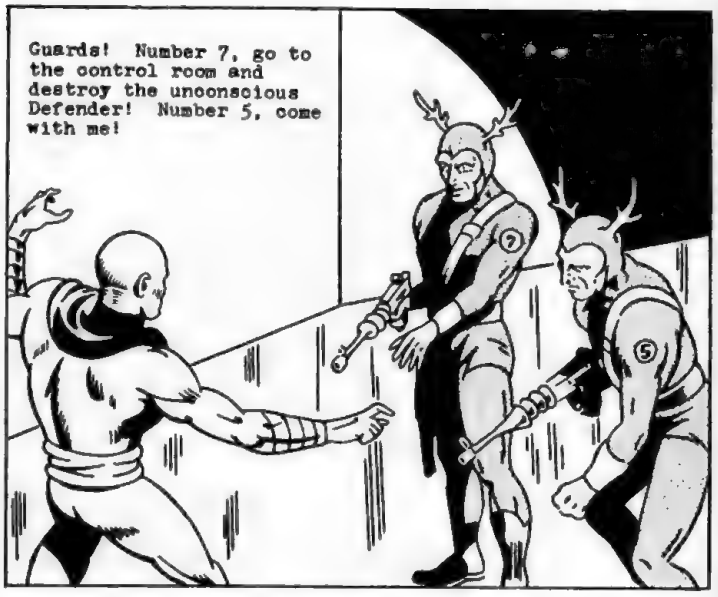
Jolene screams, "Brawn, you've opened fire on the Ruler's citadel with David still inside!"

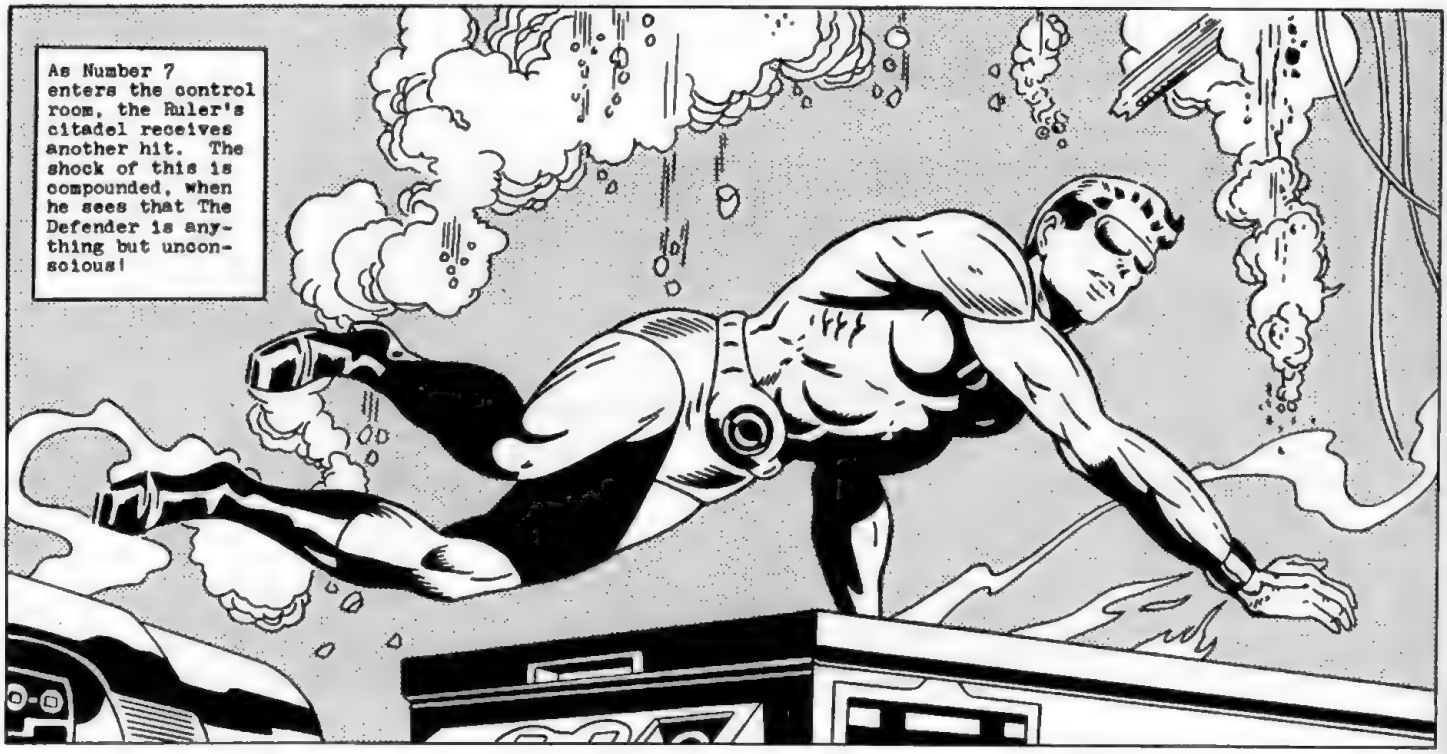
Brawn replies, "I know, my Queen, but it was at his own request and the Ruler must be destroyed!"

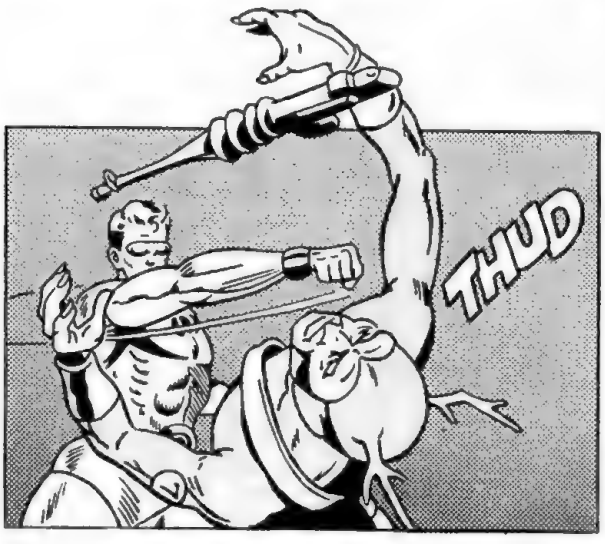



Blast! I forgot about that orbiting spacecraft. With the computer guns inoperable, our shields will soon collapse and this place will be blown to bits! I've got to get out!


Because of that spacecraft, I can't escape into space! I'll have to teleport myself elsewhere on Earth and have my men pick me up later!


Guards! Number 7, go to the control room and destroy the unconscious Defender! Number 5, come with me!


As Number 7 enters the control room, the Ruler's citadel receives another hit. The shock of this is compounded, when he sees that The Defender is anything but unconscious!

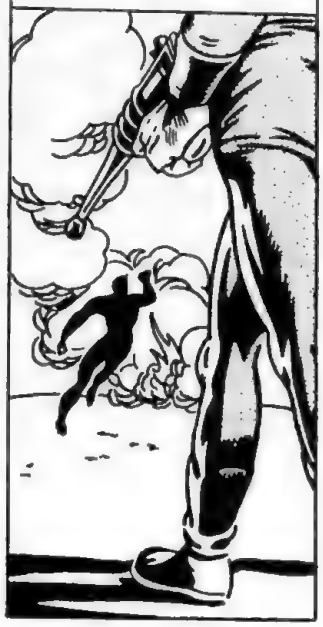

THUD

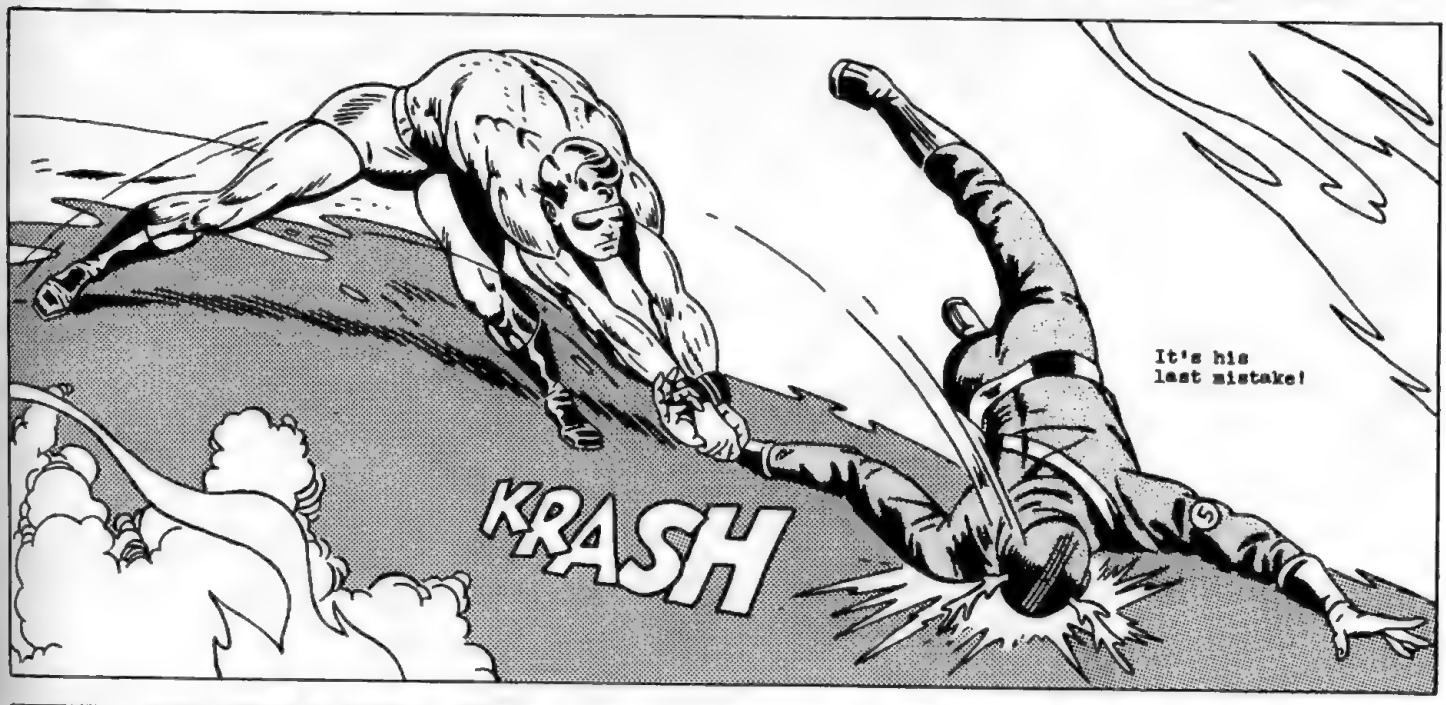
With the Ruler's citadel now in flames, his soldiers flee in terror to the rocket room. Hoping to escape into space, they are not yet aware escape this way is impossible!

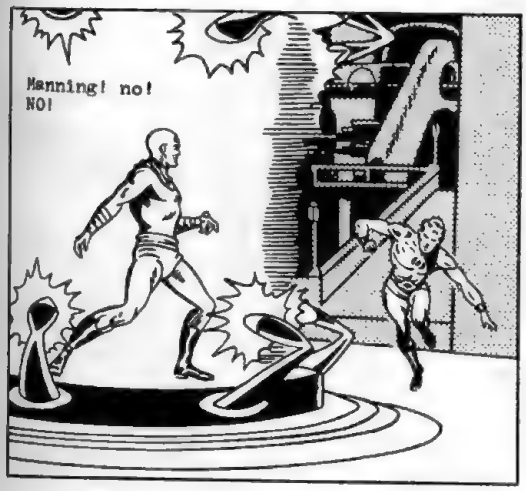
Having extracted the location of the teleporter, from Number 7, The Defender races through the now deserted corridors in pursuit of The Ruler!

Meanwhile, The Ruler sets the teleporter's controls.

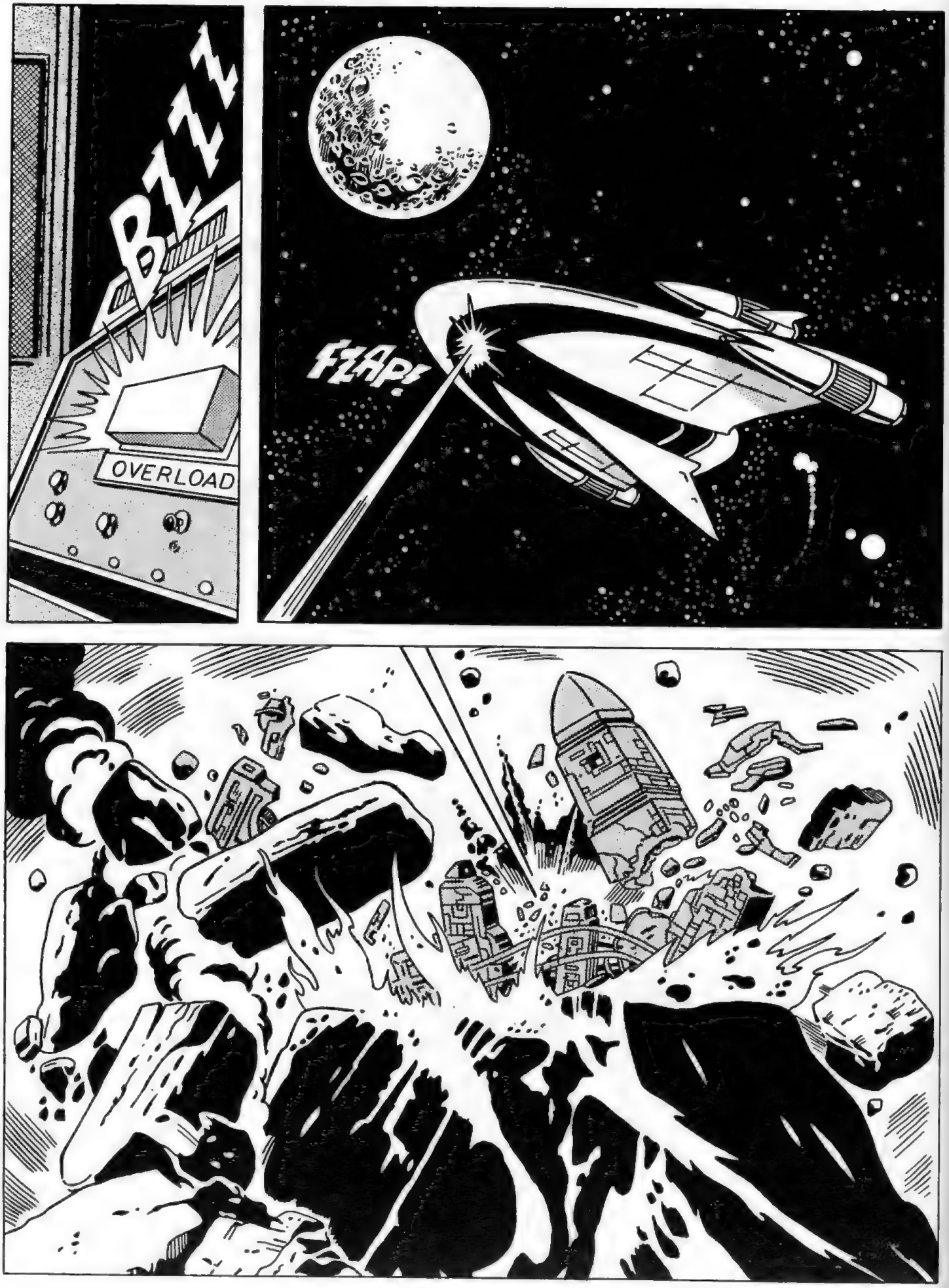
Outside the teleport room, the Ruler's guard mistakes a figure coming out of the smoke as one of his own.







Yes Ruler scream! Scream, as The Defender leaps onto the teleport panel! For you know this action will overload its settings and cause a malfunction!

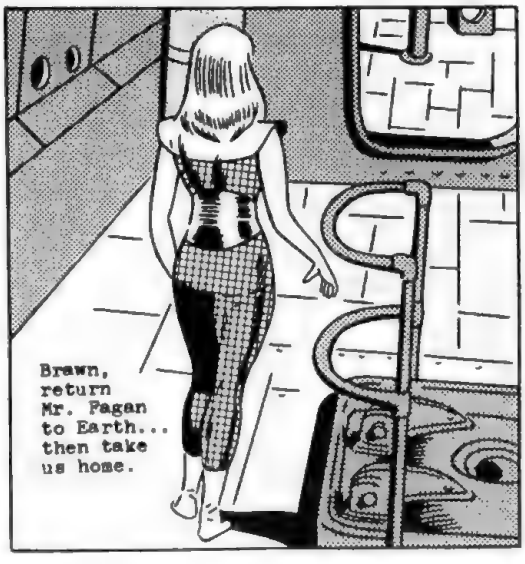

BZZZ
OVERLOAD
FLAP!

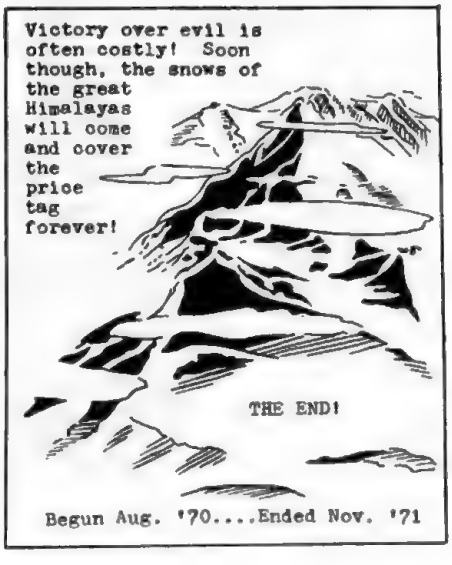
It's over! The Ruler's citadel is no more!

Were there any survivors, Brawn?

Our sensors show a teleport machine flared on for a moment, then exploded! Seconds later, their shields failed and the citadel was destroyed! Sensors now show no living being below!

Jolene, I'm sorry!


Brawn, return Mr. Pagan to Earth... then take us home.


Victory over evil is often costly! Soon though, the snows of the great Himalayas will come and cover the price tag forever!
THE END!
Begun Aug. '70....Ended Nov. '71

A TOPSY-TURVY TREATISE ON 13
BLACK '72
LADY LUCK 13 BLACK CAT DR. THIRTEEN

05701

by TOM FAGAN

THIRTEEN...DARK LEGACY OF OUR TIMES!

THIRTEEN...BROODING SYMBOL OF LUCK RUN OUT, DESTINY GONE SOUR, THE WHEEL OF ILL-FORTUNE SPINNING TOWARD AN UNESCAPABLE END, FATE-IRREVOCABLE, THINGS OUT-OF-HAND!

Think on Thirteen. Twelve minutes and one will suffice. Thirteen...the rebel number; the nasty numerical misfit. Always, the outsider. For is not the circle the mystical symbol of life? And the circle can be divided into twelfths or components of same but never, no never, into Thirteen parts or the odd multiples of the number! Thirteen, then, the adverse life factor...the unknown, that which is to be feared, the thing that strikes from without, the chance, the accident, the fluke, the hazard, the hit, the hoodoo... that which lies waiting just beyond the firelight circle of sanity with proof man's age-old terrors are not mere insurrections of his imagination but rather that which is real is false and that which is dead is not truly dead at all, but simply sleeping!

This then is an article about Thirteen. It is a gentle, fun-loved skimming of the past. My good fortune if it suits you; my bad luck---and yours---if it doesn't. Be forewarned though, I make no pretense this material is deeply researched. It's not, nor is it intended to be. It is presented as a nostalgic trip revisiting old friends and some newer ones too. It is dredged up from memory, rereadings of favorite stories, and recollections of the fireside mutterings of old grand-dames. If it must be judged, may I ask it be solely judged on those terms. Persons attempting to do otherwise will be shot...to paraphrase Mark Twain somewhat!

So meet: A man called Thirteen and his boy companion, Jinx! Lady Luck...the woman in green! Dr. Thirteen - who believes only what he sees and not always then! She who the underworld fears as "The Black Cat"...a spitfire in black satin! A clouded individual, his last name is "Btfsplk!" Dr. Drew visiting a non-existant 13th floor in an old hotel! Two-Face...his spinning coin. Twirling for good or evil. Victim or benefactor...the decision hinges on the downward plunge and the ultimate reading of..."Heads Or Tails!" The cold-blooded hate of a man, whose full name is an explosive combination of misery and despair...Jonah Hex! Thirteen raps of the gavel...The 13 Club is brought to order! Out of the four-color future materializes Thirteen, his awsome appearance signaling not the demise of one super-hero, but several!

These capsulated accounts commenced on July 13th, written by yours truly who has 13 letters in his legal signature, and sent on from Rutland, Vermont, whose zip code numbers total 13. 0 5 7 0 1, borrowed courtesy of the U.S. Snail and Post Office officials, for the express purpose of titling this article.

Sometimes, the forces close so tightly about a man he in retaliation--perhaps as the last desperate measure--takes the issue, adopts it both in heart and name, to forge psyche and psychosis into a powerful new personality! Such was the beginning of one costumed crime fighter.

Hardly the hero type was Harold Higgins; even his name didn't sound right for comics. It had a ring of a George Bernard Shaw character, not the instant identity appeal commonly given champions of justice. Harold's name was his handicap in more ways than one. Besides lacking luster, it had thirteen letters in it. That in itself was meaningful and significant. It was an appropriate name...one tailor-made and perfectly suiting a man whose luck was that usually ascribed to thirteen...All Bad! Without fail some sort of misfortune was surely his on the 13th of every month. Even worse tragedies would stalk him each Friday the 13th. It was a tiresome and troublesome existence that Harold Higgins had to endure. However, even the hexed can have their hour if they are strong enough to seize it and the stars can be criss-crossed favorably if a man has the stones to flash the finger squarely in the face of Fate.

Harold Higgins' hour arrived on a legendary 13th day in April. Destiny was again riding the 13th trail to skewer her unblest offspring. Down came her mailed fist and wham, Harold Higgins found himself fired. Not only was he out of work, but his name was slandered; his dismissal from gainful employe the result of a trumped-up charge. A lesser man might have slunk away, his tail beneath his legs and a hopelessness in the stance of his soulders. That would have been the course of the "old" Harold Higgins; he, however, no longer existed. Injustice had fired him with fury. He now stood ready to defend his name and his manhood. The score would be evened; the damage undone.

But when one chooses to operate outside the law to rectify on his own, one needs a non de guerre and a costumed identity to go along with it. After all, any self-respecting criminal would only snicker at a warning the likes of "Look Out It's Harold Higgins!" On the other hand, crooks would cringe and hoods howl in terror when the cry went up, "It's 13, Boys, And He's After Us!" No laughter in that statement at all.

Yes, Harold Higgins chose "13" as his namesake. Table turning time. Make the number work for him, not against him! Choose a cowled mask of blue. Add to it a flowing cape, flared gauntlets of mid-arm length, and buccaneer boots, all of contrasting red. Complete the costume with a form fitting leotard, matching the blue of the mask. Belt, the single-piece garment with a wicked-looking, heavily-buckled leather band of brown. Emblazon, in defiant white the number 13 across your chest. Make sure the number be large and designed to startle! Then and only then, swing down out of the shadows. Prowl the roof-tops; patrol the alleys! Strike swiftly! Hit hard! Merge with the darkness again! Night no longer favors the criminal. Like his adopted numerical name, the man spells bad luck for those who prey on society.

Initially, as 13 he proved the charge leveled against Harold Higgins not only false, but a frameup engineered by his former boss. 13 exposed the employer for the conniving criminal he really was! Did he lay aside his costume after this triumph? No indeed, in the grand comic book tradition he continued his war against men of evil, his battleground being the pages of DAREDEVIL COMICS of the 40's.

Again in the classic comic book tradition, 13 soon had a youthful assistant. This was "Jinx," a blond-haired boy, who in mundane, every-day existence was "Darrel Craig." As Jinx, however, he shed street clothes in favor of fighting garb identical to that of his mentor, the difference being a domino mask to hide his features and the head of a black cat as his chest insignia.

13 debuted in Daredevil No. 3 (September, 1941) and Jinx joined him two issues later. Together they were a team, until their final story which appeared in Daredevil 17, dated January, 1943.

Since the stories were written during wartime, 13 and Jinx naturally battled their share of spies, saboteurs

and other enemies of America. The adventures they engaged in where short on plot but long on action.

Had 13 been a historian, he might have forseen a dire prediction in the career of Woodrow Wilson. How so? Well Wilson also used reverse english concerning the number 13. In fact it became something of a presidential fetish with him. Wilson preferred the 13th day of the month to make or announce important decisions, or otherwise whenever possible to associate his activities with this number, in preference to any other. Early in his adult life, Wilson dropped the use of his first name, Thomas, and thereafter used only the latter two-thirds of his complete name, Woodrow Wilson---which consists of 13 letters.

Was 13 at work then in Wilson's later life preventing him from achieving his dream...a League of Nations, a united world living in peace? Sheer conjecture! True, but no man toys idly with 13 if he is wise. To some 13 can bring luck; it also can take it away at any time.

13 worked wonders for Harold Higgins. However, it plagued him before and it returned to do so again...maybe it was the combination of the number and having Jinx for a companion that did it finally. For Jinx by definition means "hoodoo." And certainly Harold Higgins was hoodooed. He and Jinx appeared in exactly 13 stories in Daredevil Comics and then the series was abruptly cancelled. How's that for coincidence!

Few today recall either 13 or Jinx and if they do it's only vaguely. Their "date with adventure" was all too brief. Bernie Klein is credited with writing the origin story. Dick Wood also worked on the series. The majority of the 13 and Jinx tales though were by Alan Mandell, either solo or in the company of Dan Barry.

Enough! Farewell 13 and Jinx. A lovely lady beckons! We have our own date with adventure and not being so pure-of-heart as you, we intend to keep it!

Look upon her ladyship! Isn't she...Lethal as a lioness; Loveable as a lamb; Lively like a linnet; Lithe as a leopard; Light-footed as a lynx! She's all that and more; she's a leggy, laughing lass commanding male libido longings, liberal but not lascivious. The gaul of gangland, she's glamour garbed in green...a sexy siren with a clover, her stylish sign. Luck is a lady and this then is "Lady Luck!" And we who knew her well, weren't we the lucky ones! She first came to us...ah we remember the day well, it was Sunday, specifically June 2nd, 1940. She was a pert package done up in something new for our eyes, a "Weekly Comic Book," tucked tenderly within the folds of the more mundane reading matter of our parents' Sunday paper.

Her name was Brenda Banks, to the society bores. However, more exciting company shared the pages of her little magazine. There was Denny Colt, famed as The Spirit, the limelight-lead feature. Then the Lady Luck story. Mr. Mystic, bearing the brand of the "ruler of magic," never failed to amaze and astound us with the concluding weekly adventure. Luck---good fortune---is the heady, merry mistress universally courted by those hurled into the great gamble of life. And she certainly favored Will Eisner, who convinced the Register And Tribune Syndicate an insert comic book, with original stories was not only a money-maker, but would sell more newspapers as well. The Syndicate order went out..."Okay, produce one! Have it in our hands right away or forget the idea as far as we're concerned!" Legend has it that Eisner and his small staff, over the space of a single weekend, created and drew up the three characters destined to make comic book history.

The Spirit was Eisner's brainchild. Robert Powell helped bring Mr. Mystic into being. Eisner and Nick Cardy (actually Nick Viscardy), together fathered Lady Luck, to add the woman's touch to the newly-born trinity. That Eisner would include a heroine was not by idle chance. Indeed, he well knew the appeal of a fighting female. Had he not, two years before, sired Sheena! However, whereas Sheena prowled a jungle domain, Lady Luck's environs would be the crime- infested jungle of the big cities!

Literally the word "luck" is analogous to the old German word, "Gluck," meaning "to entice". As an ancient Anglo-Saxon verb, the word may be defined "to catch." Lady Luck did both. Along with catching crooks, she caught the fancy of the reading public of her era. She was soon a popular regular feature in Smash Comics (1943 to 1949) and for a time even had her own book, LADY LUCK COMICS (December, 1949 to August, 1950). The lady was a winner alright and Klaus Nordling her steady artist for eight years, with a heaping of Reed Crandall thrown in for good measure, way back in the early days.

The lady dazzled and delighted her readers, wearing tasteful green, the color of hope. Her attire was not of red, white and blue, nor was it bracelets of gold and a revealing cut of leopard fur. That was not her way, after all she was a lady, remember! Everything green! Only in the very first story was another color part of the costume...a red lining for the cape; otherwise all was in varying shades of emerald. In the beginning, Lady Luck deigned a mask of any sort. Only as the series progressed did she favor a facial veil and that of sheerest green and thinnest see-through transparancy!

Lady Luck, in the first canticle of her crime-crushing career, was a vigilante virgin operating outside the law. A panel focuses on her gloved hand; the embroidered design is clearly evident. Explains the accompanying caption: "The Four Leaf Clover...A Symbol That Crooks Fear And Police Spend Frantic Hours Searching For..." This is a new interpretation to say the least, but Lady Luck (and her writer) is updating the old beliefs. Probably, few readers knew or cared the slightest about the roots of the clover as a good luck charm.

(Origin of the superstition is shrouded in antiquity. Whispered down through the ages through a traditional tale that Eve, when expelled from Eden, took a four-leaf clover with her, along with her apple-carnal knowledge of Adam. As a sprig of verdue from the fabled Garden of Paradise, the possession of a mutant-clover came to be regarded as a token of good fortune and still is to this day.)

None of this quaint information is given. The clover means fear and it's the calling card and trademark of "That Elusive Femme!" Lady Luck has attempted to open a safe; a man has been murdered and police vow, "This Time (She) Won't Get Away!" All this on page one. On page two Brenda Banks is introduced as, "The Most Popular Debutante Of The Season..(Who)...Fills Her Home With The Cream Of Society!" We soon know Brenda Banks is no social-silly butterfly, for another caption relates, "But In The Next Room Brenda Changes Swiftly To The Mysterious Costume Of Lady Luck!" Why was Lady Luck engaging in burglary? Did she kill the man who caught her in the act? The answers:

Holding a cowering criminal at bay by gun-point, Lady Luck tells him..."I Knew Roberts (the murdered man) Had That Check You Forged. I Was Going To Get It Back For You!" "And I Had To Mess It Up...But Why Did You Want To Help Me!" Answers Lady Luck..."For Sentimental Reasons! Your Mother, Sarah Martin, Was My Nurse...She Loves You Trigger...And I Thought I Could Help You Turn Honest!" Pathos is relieved by the arrival of police. The command..."Come Out Of The Shadows Lady! Let's Have A Look At You!" The reply..."Sorry, Copper! But That's Not In The Rules Of My Game! A Look At Lady Luck May Spoil All Your Illusions...Goodbye!" To quote further..."With That, The Lady Springs Nimbly Through The Window Into The Night..!"

Trigger Burke has not sunk so low that he has no honor to redeem himself. He admits he murdered Roberts, while never letting on he holds the key to Lady Luck's identity. All he had to do was ask his mother and B.B./L.L.'s secret would be newspaper headlines for a day!

Shades of the Fantastic Four and the Baxter Building and also a smidgen of Clark Kent. Learning of a murder (another one this time in Story Two) Brenda throws on her green gladitorial garb, remarking flamboyantly, "This Is A Job For Me!" Backing up this statement is the caption..."A Wall Of Lady Luck's Sky-Scraper Rolls Back Revealing A Hanger And...A Swift Little Racer Shoots Across The Towering Sky-Line." The 'racer' if you're wondering is a small plane and its painted insignia...you guessed it...a green four-leaf clover! However, this kind of sensationalism soon was swept clean of the series and Lady Luck leveled off into stories with plausability and plot.

Faith and ye musta had reason to give up the wearin' of the green, yer Ladyship! But there's them of us that miss you, like myself here. Sundays are so quiet now! An IRA toast to you dear Lady; sure and lots of luck wherever ye be!

His name is "Terrence." "Thomas" would suit him better! "Doubter" is more apt than "Doctor!" The Phantom Stranger always refers to him using the formal full first-name of address, "Terrence." To call him "Terry Thirteen" might be unwise. Count the letters; they add up to 13. "Dr. 13, The Ghost Breaker," as the Press headlines him, would be the first to dismiss the notion as superstitious nonsense. He holds the logical explanation sacred; the paranormal poppycock! From childhood he has been drilled to do so. It is a promise he made his now-dead father to "...Never Believe That Your Life Is Governed By Other Than Natural Cause!" It is a promise that has been put to the test, a vow

kept, knowing over the family line hangs, "The Curse of The Thirteen!"

In SHOWCASE, No. 80 (February, 1969) reprinted from its original rendering in Star Spangled Comics, back in 1951, the story of Dr. 13 is told. As a boy of "almost fifteen," he discovers: "...The Secret My Father Had Tried So Desperately To Keep...Throughout The Ages, The Thirteen Family, MY Family Had Always Been Suspected Of Powers Beyond Human Understanding..."

Has he, himself, inherited these mysterious Powers? Is he and his father preordained to die violently? What of the "cavalcade of grim destiny stretching over centuries"...an ancestor drowned because of suspected sorcery, another stoned to death for possessing the "evil eye", and still another burnt at the stake as a Salem witch? Will the role of doom continue unbroken?

GHOSTBREAKER

These questions fired his brain; cold fear numbed his reason. Reassurence returned as he listened to his father: "They Say It Is Our Name...The Unlucky Number Thirteen! But My Study Of Family History Shows Otherwise!" How so? Ahead of their time in such knowledge as the earth revolving about the sun, experimentation with electricity, ideas about anesthesia...the Thirteens were persecuted and murdered because their advanced theories were not understood by the superstitious populace. "That Is Why, Son, All My Life I Have Deliberately Defied Superstition To Prove That It Is Groundless!" The boy, Terrence, pledged to do likewise. Yet The Curse Of The Thirteen apparently refused to be thwarted. The father died horribly in a flaming car crash and Terrence, now a man of 24, left "Doomsbury Hall," the ancestral home to begin his lifes work of dispelling superstition. Dr. 13 steadily built his reputation as "ghost breaker" by exposing mediums, showing spirits to be tricks of the imagination, and saving the credulous from chicanery. Five years later he returned to Doomsbury Hall...to keep another promise to his father.

If communication with the dead was possible, the father would break the silence of the grave. A test had been prearranged years earlier and Dr. 13, alone before his father's portrait, prepared to carry it out. Candlelight flickered. The clock neared the hour of midnight, December 31st, an appointment with the dead neared. Midnight! Then he heard it! A sound that had in it all the misery of the ages...A sound of weeping...A sound of fear...And through all this, the distant but unmistakable voice of his dead father...!

Conviction shattered! Belief unhinged! Assurance tumbled! Faith dissolving! His father speaking...and yet? A hidden tape recorder, tripped off by a timing device. His fiancee, Marie, provided the explanation: "Your Father Planned All This...Made The Recording You Heard Tonight Before His Death...To Prove To You That The 'Supernatural' Can ALWAYS Be Traced To Natural Causes!"

Dr. 13 later married Marie. He once confessed before their wedding: "One Thing Still Bothers Me, Marie! The Violent Deaths Which Have Haunted Our Family... Will I, Too, One Day Fall Victim To THE CURSE OF THE THIRTEEN?"

Dr. 13's path crossed that of The Phantom Stranger, who was actually the star of that Showcase issue, and the stage was set for future encounters. Dr. 13's attitude? "You've Pulled Your Last Trick, PHANTOM STRANGER! I'm Gonna Prove You're A Phony If It Takes The Rest Of My Life!" When The Phantom Stranger was given his own book, Dr. 13 continued to play second fiddle or fill the role of introducing three-page back up features dealing with supernatural occurrences even he couldn't explain "But I Know There Must Be Some Logical Explanations...!"

That he is unable to discredit The Phantom Stranger... that he is to be frequently frustrated by the Unknown, the Unexplainable...perhaps for Terrence Thirteen that is THE (Real) CURSE OF THE THIRTEEN!

Beware the Black Cat...a warning handed down over the centuries! Favored form assumed by withches; favorite familiar of those damned souls who have inscribed their names willing in the Book of Satan. Names that glow as do the eyes of a cat in the blackest night!

Shun the cat. It has nine lives to spend in vendetta! It can see in the dark to stalk its victims without mercy. It is the creator of storms...the beloved of Hecate, evil goddess of the crossroads! Let not the black cat cross your path; misfortune is sure to follow. Above all, let not the cat jump over or onto the coffin as the body inside will not decompose and the deceased kept from entering paradise. "Cats, whose eyes grow wider or narrower according to the phases of the moon, are lunar animals, and are of the same nature as menstrual blood, with which many wonderful and miraculous things are wrought by magicians."

Destroy the Cat! Kill it! Avoid it at all cost! Cower you dealers in iniquity; take cover you scum; bleat you black sheep! Yes, run in terror with the rest of the riffraff and rats in human disguise. Out of the night comes The Black Cat, ready to rake the ranks of the underworld.

Who is she...this masked mystery-maiden? She's a wildcat, with beautiful flowing hair of flaming red. From shoulders to thighs she's garbed in alluring black satin. Her gloves and bucaneer boots with high heels are of similar color. A red belt snakes about her voluptuous waist. She's beauty on a rampage; a warrior woman that prowls the night seeking out the curs of crime.

Who knows where she may strike next? From what shadowy archway will she pounce? Yes, gangland, she's a fighting feline fury you'd like to destroy or better yet kill or at least avoid. Much as you'd like to, you can't...she seems to have the legendary nine lives of her namesake. She's as lithe and elusive too!

By day she's glamorous Linda Turner, movie idol. She plays her role well...that of the 'helpless' female. In Hollywood sexy sirens are wanted for the silver screen not a woman independent and free. No man likes to be put down, so Linda puts up a good front as the woman, demure and dependent, the society butterfly, and the darling of the cocktail set. Wouldn't the jet set be amazed to see her working out in her superbly equipped gymn. Linda...athletic? You must be mistaken dear...not "our" Linda.

Nighttime is another matter entirely. Forsaking evening gown for fighting costume, Linda lets her hair down and emerges as The Black Cat. A powerful ebony motorcycle is her steed, a massive machine hurtling her down a highway of adventure.

Black Cat first sharpened her claws in 1941 and her stories continued into the early 50's. She was a trend-setter and Black Canary and Batgirl, both of whom came much later, copied her style in an interesting number of ways. For Black Cat was a master of Judo...in fact for a time she gave monthly judo lessons, for the benefit of her readers. "Now Bend Sharply From The Waist Twisting His Arm Downward Toward Your Left Foot, And The Bully Flies Over Your Hip And Shoulder To Land On His Head!" While Black Canary offered no detailed courses in mayhem and mauling, nevertheless she is an accomplished mistress of the martial arts like her predecessor.

Batgirl borrowed even more from Black Cat. Only Police Commissioner Gordon knows his daughter, Barbara, is Batgirl. Likewise, Linda's father, a private detective, knew and condoned his daughter's crimefighting career. Rick Horne, Linda's boy friend, never suspected his sweetheart had a secret life; neither does Jason Bard know of his darling's nocturnal activities as Batgirl. And, of course, the motorcycle is the favored transportation of both martial misses.

Fanciers of Black Cat could read her adventures in comic books including POCKET, SPEED, ALL NEW, BLACK CAT, DOUBLE UP, STRANGE FANTASY and BLACK CAT WESTERN. "The Cat" had many artists, but some of the best... like Lee Elias and Joe Kubert. Black Cat was truly a goddess of the Golden Age!

You've heard of people who muddle tiredly through life with a dark cloud over their heads. Nothing seems to go right for them. Misfortune is their constant companion. Bad luck dogs their heels; nips their chances. Fortune quickly turns her back in their presence; Fate gives them the third finger!

Meet such an individual. Joe Btfsplk is the name. When he passes by folk don't howdy-do him, they whisper hoodoo out of his hearing and cross their fingers hoping nothing too bad will hapen.

Bad luck has a habit of rubbing off Joe. He's a walking jinx. Your cabin's liable to collapse; turnip termites take over your patch. Joe's one man no gal, no matter how desperate she may be, tries to catch come Sadie Hawkins Day.

No one loves Joe Btfsplk. No, that's not quite true. One person--or rather one thing does. As Joe says with resignation: "All Mah Life Ah Has Had This Cloud Over Mah Haid! It Keeps Comin' Back!"

Understatement. His cloudy cohort hardly ever leaves Joe. They've grown so used to one another, they'd be lonely if seperated. Joe tried it once; he bottled the cloud. The sight of a weeping cloud under glass so unnerved him, he soon uncorked it.

The cloud has a personality, even if Joe hasn't much of one to endear him to others. So it loyally continues to rain down on the head of its friendly little loser. A loser, loved by reader's of Lil' Abner, if not the people of Dogpatch, U.S.A.

Even today it is not unusual to register at a hotel and find it does not have a thirteenth floor, the floor arrangement miraculously skipping from the twelfth to the fourteenth. Room number 13, too, is usually ommitted in any room plan catering to the general public.

An opening panel in a story from THE SECRET FILES OF DR. DREW reflected this hold-over relic of superstitious belief. Dr. Drew is speaking: "The Story I'm Going To Tell You Is One Of The Strangest In My Experience! It Concerns An Elusive 13th Floor!... Many Older Buildings In This City, As You Know, Were Built With No 13th Floor...And The Wainwright Building Was No Exception...For The Late Adam Wainwright Was A Very Superstitious Man!"

A distraught young elevator operator tells Dr. Drew of how he let Joseph Wainwright (Adam's brother) and a woman off on a non-existant 13th floor of the Wainwright Building. He had thought the whole incident a dream or imagination, until he read in the newspaper that Wainwright had died the night before in prison, after serving 20 years for the murder of his brother Adam. Without wasting time, Dr. Drew and the young man went to the Wainwright Building. As the elevator reached the 13th floor a strange drama unfolded before their eyes. The ghost of Joseph Wainwright recreated the events that caused his brother's death. His brother was actually killed by his wife who wished to inherit his fortune. However, the recreated events go beyond what Wainwright's ghost had planned. There are events still to be played out. Joseph Wainwright laughs as the woman sobs, "You Told Me You Loved Me And If I Got Rid Of Your Brother We Could Share The Estate...!" He has no intention of sharing; the woman is thrown to her death down the

full length of a ventilating shaft. Dr. Drew steps from the shadows..."And Now We Witnessed The TRUTH ...And That Includes The Way YOU KILLED LUCY...Eh, Joseph?" But he's dead, wails the elevator operator. "YES...I DIED...But I've Returned To Prove I Didn't Kill My Brother! I Meant Only To Clear Myself...But Now You've Seen Too Much...I CREATED THIS WORLD FOR YOUR EYES...AND I CAN DESTROY IT! RUN, FOOLS...RUN!"

With spectral walls crashing down about them, Dr. Drew and the young man barely make the safety of the elevator and descend twelve flights of reality. "What D'Ya Suppose Happened To The Money??", asks the youth. Lighting up his pipe, Dr. Drew comments, "Still Up In The Shaft Somewhere...But Who'd Want $500,000 With A Murderer's Blood On It?" Eyes narrow in avarice. "WHO'D WANT $500,000?? Are Y'NUTS? Me...I'd Take That Kinda Dough Outta A Dead Man's Fist!" Greed! Alone the youth guns the elevator skyward. Or is he alone? As he stops the elevator, a shade is beside him. "But There Is No 13th Floor, Boy! Remember, This Building Was Built Without One!...See For Yourself!" A yawning shaft is the last thing the screaming, falling body ever sees!

Explosion rocks the Wainwright Building into total collapse. Later it is determined the reverberating destruction occurred between the 12th and 14th floors of the old landmark. Firemen found at the base of the elevator shaft, the body of the building's night elevator boy...clutching $500,000...In Bills...!

The Dr. Drew stories are among the most overlooked better offerings of Golden Age tales. They appeared in RANGER COMICS. For sheer suspense and imaginative artwork, seldom were they surpassed. Originally, the series was known as "Werewolf Hunter" but the title was soon changed to read, "The Secret Files Of Dr. Drew; Stalker Of The Unknown."

Dr. Drew was drawn with Sherlock Holmes facial features. His dress was distinctive; he favored ascots and the wearing of a volumnious, concealing cape. He was forever lighting a pipe and the flickering match he held served to highlight the general eeriness of his appearance. If the art appeared Eisnerish, there was good reason. The artist was Jerry Grandenetti, who had served his early apprenticeship under Will Eisner. Outre angle shots, unusual panels and rich shadings, Grandenetti brought all the Eisner tricks and some of his own to his delineation of Dr. Drew. To lend an idea of the atmosphere customarily provided, here are opening quotes from one story: "It Is A Long, Weary Climb To The Old House Atop Bone Hill...On The Outskirts Of Town...But Once You Are There If He Favors You, The Famous Doctor Will Dip Into His Files And Recall For You One Of His Experiences In The Eerie World That Lies Somewhere Between Reality And Infinity. If You Are Made Of Stern Stuff, You Will Retain Your Sanity...SOME Of His Guests HAVE, You Know..."

How often has Fortune hinged on the toss of a coin... Decision determined by an outcome of "heads or tails?" To some the coin is a lucky-piece, a means of divining destiny. On which side it lands is the great gamble. An innocent pasttime yet great wealth has been won or lost because of the ever-tempting toss. Fates have been sealed by this exercise in probability. Life and death have hung in the balance of a coin's capricious chance!

The simple expediency of minted predeterminations was favored by one of comic book's most memorable villians. Savage, sullen and souless as they be, none is as bizarre as...TWO-FACE! Of the dark brotherhood, he is the most terrifying of all!

The morbid fascination of Two-Face is that he represents the dual nature of every man. He is a living

personification of good turned bad...of a scale tipped from the social to the anti-social. Two-Face is the star-crossed human, a bastard child of Janus.

Now maniacal, but once sane! Formerly handsome, now hideously ugly! Sound thinking has given away to sinister schizophrenia. A promising future cartwheeled violently to a bleak future. In his sub-conscious, Two-Face realizes the dichotomy...that he is aware of it, that is the shocking horror of the doublecross Destiny has dealt him. Two-Face is literally both sides of the coin. One half of his face remains unmarred; the other is twisted and grotesque...the eye droops menacingly, the lip caught slack, the scars stand out in frenzy! Even his clothing reflects his two-sideness...One side neatly pressed businessman's attire, the other ragged, unkempt and soiled. Is it any wonder then he chooses a "two-headed" coin as his particular amulet of avidity. It is a silver dollar ---the mint-mark, 1922. Like his countenance, one side is disfigured, the other unscathed. "Heads!" determines a crime committed for self-gain. "Tails!" and the decision is that purloined proceeds are to be donated to an orphanage, a poor person or a charitable cause. Despite his ugliness, there is a touch of Pretty Boy Floyd in Two-Face's lifestyle.

Everything in two's, that is Two-Face's code. A flip of the coin is how he selects his henchmen. His crimes have a polarity about them; two always figuring in the master plan. Two banks at the opposite end of town would be a prime target. A two-toned car as the getaway vehicle, that would be doubly appealing!

Two-Faces most hated foes? They number two also. They are the daring duo...the double-dynamite team of Batman and Robin.

Before adopting his role of duplicity and deceit, Two-Face was Harvey Kent a district attorney. In bringing "Lucky" Morony to trial, Kent introduced a silver dollar as evidence to show the gambler had been at the scene of a crime. The coin, Kent told the jury, was Morony's lucky piece. Snarling with rage, Morony vaulted across the courtroom and viciously hurled the contents of a bottle of acid into Kent's face before being subdued by guards. The acid did more than eat away skin; it burned into the brain also! With half his face loathsome and repulsive to his sight, Kent brooded imagining himself a living Jekyll-Hyde. "Morony's Silver Dollar! It Has Two Faces...Clean And Handsome As Mine Once Were! I'll Make One Of Its Faces Ugly, Evil Like Mine...! A Coin With Two Faces...Like Mine! Which Face Will Turn Up When I Flip The Coin?" Mockingly, the dollar twirled upwards and derisively descended down! "The EVIL Side Wins! CRIME Wins! From This Day On, This Two-Faced Coin Will Be The Symbol Of TWO-FACE!"

Figuring the odds in an uncertain world, Two-Face reasoned calling heads or tails (good or evil) was a fair bet because the chance of either result is one-half. He knew no one expects a coin to fall heads once in every two tosses, but in a large number of tosses the results tend to even out. Those were his kind of odds!

Applying Two-Face's reasoning further, one can compute that for a coin to fall heads 50 times consecutively, it would take a million men tossing coins 10 times a minute and 40 hours a week...and then it would happen only once every nine centuries!

As far as he was concerned then, Two-Face gave even odds. More than once, he gloatingly told a trapped Batman and Robin: "My Lucky Coin Will Decide Your Fate! If It Lands On The GOOD Side, You'll LIVE! If On The Scarred Side, You DIE!"

At least "two-false" Two-Faces appeared in the comic books before the original returned. In the Batman newspaper strip (1944 to 1946) there was a different Two-Face. This "duplicate" ego was not a lawyer, he was an actor. He cashired in by hanging...his neck wrenched by wires in a fall during a flight to avoid capture. This Two-Face was brought about when a jealous stagehand substituted real acid, in place of colored water, during the re-enactment of Two-Face's career.

In 1953 the "real" Two-Face returned to plague the caped couplet anew. This time though he was named "Harvey Dent" probably in deference to a more-famous "Kent", one named "Clark!" Destiny had written a double indemnity clause for Dent. His handsome features remolded by plastic surgery, Dent had resumed his promising law career. Fortune made certain, however, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time! A safe-cracking in progress...The explosive charge already lit...Two startled criminals surprised by Dent! Attempting to apprehend the pair on his own, Dent took the full force of the delayed blast as the felons fled! Surgeon's work undone! Face again halved! The tragedy? Impossible now for medical science to return the features to normal! Dent was a marked man for the rest of his days! The Wheel of Fortune had twice-turned! The criminal career of Two-Face begins again...Batman and Robin beware! They didn't and Two-Face was imprisoned eventually.

In 1971, Two-Face returned to fluster The Batman once more, but this hassle seemed singularly uninspired to those faithful few who remembered the double-quick Two-Face of old. Purists noted the sacred-scarred silver dollar was not dated 1922! Double shame be yours for that, Neal Adams---artist; if you had given the previous stories a second glance, tradition at least would have been preserved. As presented in BATMAN COMICS 234, the Adams' Two-Face was a dubious doppleganger of the former malignant male we both alternately loathed and liked!

In his soul, every man is a potential Two-Face! Sheer terror lays in that realization. Two-Face is us all and likewise we are Two-Face! That identification alone makes him twice as dreadful as any of the monsters in human form to ever haunt the pages of comic books!

"And they said to him: Tell us for what cause this evil is upon us, what is thy business? Of what country art thou? and whither goest thou? or of what people art thou?"

The Jonah of The Old Testament was asked these questions. And when he answered men cast him out, for had not Jonah fled the face of the Lord and was not the face of Yahweh now turned from the once-favored son! Might not the Jehovah, too, look with displeasure on any befriending Jonah?

Fear! sparked the story of Jonah down through centuries of retelling until the name, Jonah, itself, conjured up the vision of a man nobody wanted... the outcast scion of heaven and humanity...the unlucky one...the one who brings ill luck to others...the harbinger of harm!

Hex! another word of ancient meaning, also steeped in superstition! Witchery...the evil eye...the curse... the evil spell...the deadly charm...the dark forces unleashed. To hex is to be in league with the devil; to be hexed is to have Satan staring you in the eyes as you run knowing you have no chance of escape! Two words that are the embodiment of abhorrence and dismay. Join them and you have JONAH HEX! A cold-unfeeling killer, or was he? Or rather was it he used humanity instead of allowing men to use him!

ALL-STAR WESTERN No. 10 (Feb.-March) first introduced Jonah Hex to DC readers in 1972. John Albano scripts, Tony DeZuniga art, Joe Orlando editing..."three strikes and in"...Jonah Hex pictured as half ugly, boding evil and a notch above all other gunfighters. With Issue 12 (June-July, '72) National Periodical Publications, quick on the draw to capitalize on the mounting interest in the occult and the supernatural, changed the title logo to the more alluring WEIRD WESTERN TALES! Jonah's character remained as laced with violence as ever; the emphasis on the arcane, the strange and inexplicable, the mystical...that would follow appropriately enough in Issue THIRTEEN! An opening quote from that issue inquired: "What Had Alerted The Rider To The Danger Of This AMBUSH? Is He The Recipient Of Some Strange Premonition?... Is He The Possessor Of SOME Sixth Sense That Permits Him To See That Which Is Invisible To Any Living Mortal?...Or Is This Man...This Vicious, Hired Gunfighter...In League With The Devil?"

An outlaw's shivery thought: "...Whut They Say 'Bout Thet Jonah...Him Having Some Kind'a IMMORTALITY...And Being Able To CAST SPELLS Over His Enemies...You Think..."

A killer on the run after murdering his own father, the man..."Who First Showed You (Hex) How To USE Those Blasted Irons!..." thinks: "Wish Ah Could Git Rid Of This Odd Feeling Thet's Been Plaguing Me For The Last Couple Hours...Keep Thinking Thar's Someone Or Something Watching Me"...Out of the shadows comes that someone. Confrontation with a full moon and a tensed wolf to witness: "Y'Know, Ah've Heard How Many Men Yore Gun Has Sent To A One-Way Trip To HELL, But..." "Cut The Speeches An' Draw!" is Hex's ominous command. Words that are last rites...a father's death has been avenged...the friend of Jonah's past may now res in peace!

The ways of a Jonah are lonely. Declared the Jonah of old: "...I cried out of my affliction to the Lord, and he heard me...I cried out of the belly of hell and Thou hast heard my voice."

Jonah Hex cries out in a different manner...he does

it with the shout of six-guns. His personal hell is his pretense he has no feelings, yet his actions belie his words. Jonah Hex cries alright but on the inside so no one may suspect. Maybe the Lord hears him; maybe not. Jonah doesn't look up; he looks straight ahead. He begs no favors, divine or other! He travels alone in this hell on earth. Alone?...Not quite...A stallion nickers gently; it is General. The bark is curt but reassuring from Iron Jaws, the wolf. Where you go, Jonah Hex, we will follow! Wolf loping... Horse in easy canter...Man hunched against the wind, his face half concealed by shadow. Against a lingering sunset they are silhouetted only as canine, human and beast of burden. Who knows who passes this twilight hour!

Thirteen men sneered at superstition and The Joker was wild! The mercenary montebank shuffled his cards stacking the deck in favor of superstitious signs and fortune-frowning Thirteen. Well might the jackanapes of grim jocularity want to protect the unsavory reputation of the ill-omened numeral. In a sense it's his number...the 13th card. Twelve pasteboards in a suit with the Joker as its illegitimate offspring!

Television and 13 raps of the gavel introduced the 13 CLUB to Gotham City viewers. Members in turn invited adversity: A black cat crossed the path of the club president; salt was spilled; three on a match; the breaking of a mirror; walking under a ladder; an umbrella opened indoors; shoes placed on a table... and so on until the presentation of the 13th member.

Interruption. A package brought on stage. Opened for public view, the parcel contained an 8-Ball and a note reading: "Since You Invite Bad Luck, You Invite Me. And Old Superstition Says That To Be Behind An 8-Ball Means Black Years...So, I Send The Thirteen Club This Omen!" No name was signed; the be-belled jester symbol served as countersign signature. No name had to be written! Consternation. The 13th member-to-be cried out, "NO! I Resign! I'm Not Superstitious---But If The Joker's In On This--- I'm OUT!" In desperation, the club president, appealed to the tense studio audience..."Who Among You Will Become Member Number 13? Surely Someone...?" A silence of spellbinding seconds..."Then A Firm Voice Speaks! Will I Do?" A heroic costumed figure strode onto the stage. Hearts beat a bit faster in admiration of the man who has chosen the winged creature of the night as his own symbol of good!

Batman met The Joker head-on, as he fought to prevent a series of "bad luck" crimes aimed at the 13 Club's members. Finally Batman and Robin escaped a high voltage electrical trap by the use of a common pin. (To see how-read Batman No. 40, April-May, 1947 where the 13 Club story originally appeared - "HA, HA!" rasped the Rutland Rodent!) The Joker is finally brought to justice, when Batman scores a "ringer" with a hurled horseshoe. This is done at the stroke of one! That's 13 Hundred Hours, Army Time!

Another hodgepodge of hocus-pocus cropped up in CAPTAIN ATOM, No. 89. Dated December, 1967, the Ditko/McLaughlin cover literally howled its bewitching, warning: "THE GHOST RETURNS AS CAPTAIN ATOM FACES THE MENACE OF THIRTEEN!"

In scripting the superstitious saga, David A. Kaler proffered a profusion of paranormal paraphernalia. Leaping Legerdemain! there was: A white-helmeted figure from the future. Across the headpiece blazed the numbers One and Three identifying him as "Thirteen!" His booted green jumpsuit was belted in brown at the waist. Voluminous white sleeves swept out from his arms like huge moth-wings. Master of the Chicane, this Thirteen had as his time-traveling companion, the "Feline Familiar Faustus!" Need you be told Faustus was a black cat?

Then there was The Ghost, the familiar faceless foe of the "Atomic Ace." Returned from the outer-dimensional world of the "golden women," The Ghost has two priorities...robbery and the destruction of Captain Atom!

And Captain Atom, himself. Having forsaken a splendid costume of gold and scarlet some time ago, he was now dressed in the more acceptable (and mundane) red and blue, so dear to the hearts of superheroes everywhere. Captain Atom should have done two things. Kept to his original colors and perhaps continued on as Charlton Comics' golden boy indefinitely. That and steered clear of Thirteen. If only he had, but...

Concern of all three was a missile that had materialized out of a space warp. Enclosed within were weapons and secrets that could destroy all mankind. Thirteen and The Ghost were both aware of this; Captain Atom was not. However, he did know tests disclosed "It Is Ages Old But More Advanced Than All Our Missiles!" The battlelines were drawn. Supernatural stratagems were supernumerary. In order of progression they were: Thirteen appearing in a crystal ball warning The Ghost not to interfere! Writing on a wall, in fire, declaring..."Nothing Can Stop 13!" Magical scarves binding Captain Atom! Flipped Coins, "So Little; Yet Heavy Beyond Belief!" stopping pursuit by the Captain! An angered Ghost finding his fists filled with flowers frustrating his attempt to teleport Captain Atom out of this world! Faustus using the "Indian Rope Trick," with the magical fibers holding Captain Atom powerless!

A broken mirror, a giant umbrella, a Houdini chain-wrapping for Captain Atom, and finally flowers in the place of atomic fire balls, courtesy of Thirteen, who in leaving calls back: "There's Really No Need To Stop Us As We're Leaving!" Faustus' departing yowl is the promise, "We Won't Be Troubling You Ever Again!" There is really no need of Thirteen and his cat companion returning. They have sent the missile ahead of them into the future, where they themselves arrive shortly. It is here we find that Thirteen and Faustus are Planetary Agents who time traveled back to save the Earth. Thirteen and a black cat...for once Forces of Good! A shocking disclosure!

What followed calls for a double-take, a revaluation of Fortune. A second encounter with The Ghost was promised in the very next story. It was even titled, THE SHOWDOWN IN SUNURIA! Issue 90 never saw print! The Captain Atom magazine had folded! In short order, Charlton also closed out the magazines of their other action-heroes!

Thirteen, good or bad as he may have been, certainly left his brand on Charlton Comics. After his unlucky arrival, the company's entire line shifted to a preponderance of comics dealing with the supernatural and lore steeped in superstition. Jugglery, most unjust!

Jackhammer away the concrete of civilization; see the cowering clay of humanity beneath. If science doesn't have the answers; superstition does. There is little difference between Troglodyte and Twentieth-Century Man when it comes to facing and explaining the unknown. Thirteen is still very much with us! And people continue on and on, believing Thirteen stands for Evil or Good...Misfortune or Fortune...The choice is yours; Or is the choice...That Of Thirteen!

THE MAN BEHIND THE FIRST MAN OF THE SEA

by RON FORTIER

Last winter Charlton Publications launched a new comic entitled Primus and it was based on the television series of the same name. Like the TV version, the comic dealt with the sea-going adventures of Carter Primus, a Lloyd Bridges-James Bond hero.

Now the magazine's initial appearance did little to excite the average comic fan. The cover was plastered with publicity photos of actor Robert Brown in a wet suit and had the appearance of a movie mag rather than a comic. Very unimaginative to say the least.

Fortunately, some die-hard readers were not put off by this front mess and had the daring to look inside. It would be an understatement to say what they discovered was a surprise. The interior illustrations were clean, dramatic and highly original. In short the artwork was excellent.

Perhaps more puzzling was the name of the artist, JOE STATON. Who is he?

JOE T. STATON is a talented young man with a gracious attitude towards inquisitive fans. He kindly submitted himself to our parade of questions, without hesitation and his answers were both amusing and informative.

Thus, without further rambling, we happily present Joe T. Staton, the man behind the first man of the sea.

CC - Joe, before getting started, we would like to say congratulations on your fine PRIMUS work.

STATON - Thanks, I always welcome comment -- especially favorable comment, and, alas, especially as comfort for a title that has just been dropped.

CC - No more Primus?

STATON - PRIMUS will unfortunately cease with the seventh issue, in which Hubert Humphrey kidnaps Richard Nixon and Primus has to prevent W.W. III again.

CC - Do you know the reason behind the cancellation?

STATON - It seems that everyone who was watching the program was buying the comic -- but Robert Brown and my mother just weren't enough to keep either the comic or the show afloat.

CC - Don't underestimate the number of your readers, Joe. Now that Primus is gone, what will you be working on?

STATON - I've dropped back into the horror and girl's romance comics until another adventure series comes in to Charlton. I'm also doing some of the horror comic's covers now.

CC - Joe, in case the FBI gets a hold of this, how about some basic statistics such as where and when you were born?

STATON - I was born 19 January, 1948, at the Army hospital at Ft. Bragg, N.C.; thus making me, in no particular order, a Capricorn (on the cusp of Aquarius -- a classically ambiguous combination of signs,) a service brat, and 24 years old at the moment. My father was an Air Force career man and we bounced about from base to base during most of my early days, during which I picked up a love of airplanes and a dislike for staying in one place very long. After my father's death, we moved back to my mother's home in Tennessee, where I spent a rather constricted adolescence.

CC - What kind of formal education did you acquire?

STATON - I went to college in Murray, Kentucky, where I more or less majored in fine arts and wound up with my bachelor's degree in art. During that time I scrounged up a scholarship from Chapman College in California, to their World Campus Afloat program (the program that was recently going to convert to the Queen Elizabeth as its campus) and so spent about four months aboard ship studying in Europe, Africa and South America.

CC - Sounds like fun.

STATON - During the course of those four months, I encountered most of the major art collections in the hemisphere, a lot of water, and a weird California girl named Hilarie who wanted to spend her life doing Behavior Modification on children with minimal Brain Dysfunction -- remember her, she'll return to the chronicles later, though at this point she just returned to California, while I returned to Kentucky to finish school.

CC - When did you first become involved with comics?

STATON - All during high school and to a lesser degree during college, I had been involved in science-fiction fandom and had done some art for various fanzines. I had encountered comics fandom a couple of times, but had been put off by the atmosphere of twelve-year-olds stealing nickels.

CC - Sorry to hear that. Hopefully we can change that for you. Are there any comics zines you do like?

STATON - Sure -- I've been fascinated by anything that comes from Don and Maggie Thompson, or from Bill Spicer. In fact, the only fanzine -- sf or comics -- that I subscribe to currently, is Spicer's GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE.

CC - Back to the comics question itself. What encouraged you to try comics?

STATON - I had encountered Danny Adkins through the sf fanzines and had, for a short time, corresponded with him, finding out what I might expect if I tried to get into comics. Danny had a pronounced influence on most of my earlier drawings. At any rate, after I got my degree, I left for New York with an eye toward landing comics work.

CC - What happened when you arrived in Metropolis?

STATON - Danny had moved back to Ohio, and Richard Nixon's economics were coming down hard on the art field, as I tried to find work -- of any kind.

CC - For example?

STATON - I finally found a job designing rubber ducks. Well actually vinyl ducks; inflatable beach toys and P.O.P. advertising displays. I managed to put up with that for six months, in the course of which I encountered entirely too many J. Water Thompson people and so developed a lasting contempt for the field of advertising and for most of the grubs who inhabit it. I finally walked out on that one, and eventually drifted into a strictly survival job with a photographer's agent. That one didn't last long at all. Then for a few months I pasted together an offset newspaper in Brooklyn -- a job which I actually liked quite a bit -- until I was fired so the newspaper could hire two Puerto Ricans.

CC - A ghastly fate indeed. You certainly had your share of knocks. Were there any bright moments in all this struggling?

STATON - Remember the girl from the ship? Well she had re-surfaced sometime along in there, having gotten a teaching job on Long Island. She furnished all kinds of moral support during the struggling and the suffering. Jack Gaughan once said that if you want to make a living as a free-lance artist, you need either a hell of a nerve or a hell of a wife. It turned out that I had the wife, since she decided to go ahead and marry an out-of-work, out-of-luck artist. Also along there somewhere, I had gotten my first comic assignment -- a short, badly written Steve Skeats story from Warren for CREEPY. (The Amazing Money-Making Wallet....Creepy 42 Nov. 71)

CC - How did you get along with the notorious Mr. W?

STATON - Warren turned out to be a great deal more trouble than he was worth. I wanted to draw comic books and he thought comics should be filled with slick advertising illustrations. So I eventually got tired of hassling with him and mailed in the story with a bill. He paid me, ran the story and I never went back there.

CC - How did you finally hook-up with Charlton?

STATON - During an abbreviated honeymoon, we stopped in at Charlton. I got a ghost story to do and Sal Gentile, Charlton's editor at the time, and a very nice man, was sufficently pleased to send me another. Before any of the ghost work had actually been printed, Sal offered me PRIMUS. Things have been pretty solid since then.

CC - What other artists, beside Dan Adkins, do you admire?

STATON - To be perfectly honest with you, it would be a lot easier to come up with a list of people that I don't like. However, I'll try to nail down a few favorites. Gil Kane is sort of a basic style to respect; especially his early Green Lantern work as inked by Anderson. Jim Aparo and Neal Adams are beautiful in the faces they use. Each of their characters fits his part perfectly. Lou Fine and Jack Davis for their characterizations, too. Russ Manning for his authenticity (his old SEA HUNT comics are the optimum skin diver comics.) Steve Ditko as a really unique visual vocabulary, and a keen sense of design. Joe Kubert as the only guy in the business with an understanding of figure-ground relationships. I told you this would get out of hand...why not just say that I consider Don Heck and Herb Trimpe incompetent, but that I enjoy just about everybody else? Oh, one other fellow who has been remarkably helpful to me is Mike Hinge. (Mike does a lot of covers for AMAZING and FANTASTIC, covers for Lancer and a couple of Time covers lately.) Mike is a great source of information about tax laws, billing procedures, publishers, shucks ---all the nitty-gritty that keeps your head above water, the things that the art schools don't know about.

CC - If you had the opportunity to work for either DC or Marvel, which would you choose?

STATON - DC ten years ago, or Marvel five years ago. My real love is the kind of space opera that Julius Schwartz used to do at DC, but nobody is doing that sort of thing today. At the moment, the stuff coming from DC interests me the most -- especially their weird titles, like WITCHING HOUR and Aparo's PHANTOM STRANGER, which I'd say is my favorite of the current crop of comics. But realistically, you realize that I'd work for anybody who'd pay me -- with the exception of Warren...may unpleasent things happen to him in an alley.

CC - Joe, your fangs are showing. On the kinder side, what advice would you offer aspiring young artists?

STATON - I don't think I'm the one to ask. My own experience isn't all that extensive. But the initial advice Adkins gave me seems to remain valid -- (1) Forget about the whole thing and sell insurance or something, and (2) if you're persistent and won't forget about it, remember that drawing comics, illustrating magazines, painting portraits, pasting together Revlon ads or whatever -- is a job, and that it can be a very exhausting job, both physically and emotionally. Inking 5 pages overnight to hit a deadline, or having an editor refuse to even see you, are both a bit trying to handle. So I suppose any suggestions I might have boil down to: Learn to work like a mule and learn to cope with total rejection.

CC - Joe, thank you for this truly enjoyable and informative talk. We're betting you'll wind up on top!

Mr. A.

Rex Graine, as a man, a reporter and as MR. A., avenges the victims of injustice.

CHAPTER 1.

JUSTICE MERCY

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A stolen car... a hit and run add up to...

a VICTIM...

...and the GUILTY.

I'll be in the clear if I can get away without being recognized.

STOP HIM! Let me through.

...Not our concern.

He's RUDE!

They all saw the hit but only one person let himself know and judge what he saw.

Is he the one?

He's young.

...err..ah..gee.. I...I..I dunno..

Why ask me?

Must we tell?

They don't want to uphold the truth. They'd rather evade the issue or lie.

THAT'S HIM! THAT'S THE DRIVER OF THE HIT AND RUN CAR!

Okay, Graine, now we can book him.

He wouldn't lie for me..let me get away with what I did.

It's not Ken's fault. He's an innocent victim of his environment, of society. Don't take a heartless vengeance... don't give punishment..give MERCY to one of GOD'S children.

Please, give me MERCY. What I did shouldn't be held against me.

Society has failed you but the jury and this court grant you MERCY. Forgive us for not making you a decent human being.

Yeh, I'm innocent of my crimes. Everyone else should feel guilty and take the blame for what I did.

HA!HA! They let me get away with it. They're all showing how forgiving they can be to the GUILTY. They act like it's normal not to care about JUSTICE. They don't give a care for the VICTIM, it's the GUILTY they're anxious to protect.

The cruelest INJUSTICE was caused, NOT by the GUILTY but by our DECENT citizens. When the GUILTY are NOT to be treated as GUILTY, the VICTIMS CANNOT be looked on as VICTIMS. Our loss and pain is ignored in favor of pampering and rewarding the guilty.

JUSTICE recognizes a man for what he is and treats him accordingly. MERCY treats the guilty better than he deserves, therefore the victim less than he deserves. The GUILTY cry for MERCY; the VICTIM asks for JUSTICE. MERCY can only be granted to the GUILTY at the expense of the VICTIM.

GOOD JUSTICE EVIL MERCY

CHAPTER..2..

EARNED UNEARNED

Mr. A. by Ditko

CHAPTER..2

EARNED | UNEARNED

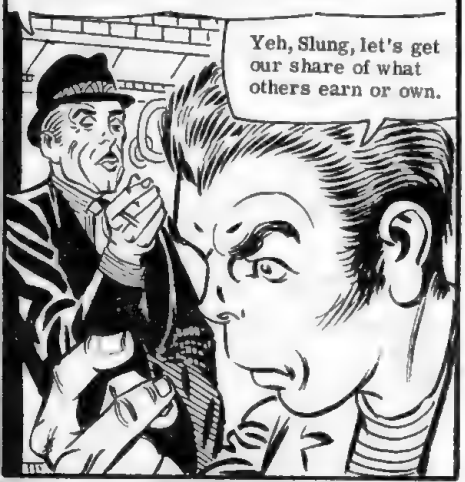
Earn it? Ha, only jerks work. Make others feel guilty for having earned and they'll be ashamed NOT to provide to the unearned or demand it by RIGHT.

Join my gang, Ken. We'll also get what we haven't earned only our victims will know it.

It's the moral way, making those who earn provide for someone else. It works with welfare, foreign aid, do-gooder programs the world over. The The DOERS are always forced to provide the GOODS for the NON-GOOD and the NON-DOERS. Yet it is the unearned and the undeserving who set the terms.. legalized banditry.

So why be a jerk EARNER and be FORCED.. FORCED to provide to a mooching world who cries they have a right to what you earn. We'll also demand and take by force only we admit it's stealing.

Yeh, Slung, let's get our share of what others earn or own.



Besides, no one protects the honest. Too many give a little when they have to and grab as much as they can as often as they can any way they can. The honest don't demand more than they've earned. The rest of us choose to be economic vampires, existing only by feeding on the earned.

You can EARN it, Graine, by staying out of my business.

UNEARNED money is a bad business, Slung.

It's not how you get it but that you have it.

To be like you is to have nothing.

You haven't earned and you don't OWN a thing that's worth anything.. your life included.

You could be earning a short life.

Ken earned his freedom. Stop being a heartless snoop.

Ken got the unearned. He's free at the expense of his victim. For that Lyner, you earned the contempt of the decent.

I got political pull. I can play dirty so lay off us.

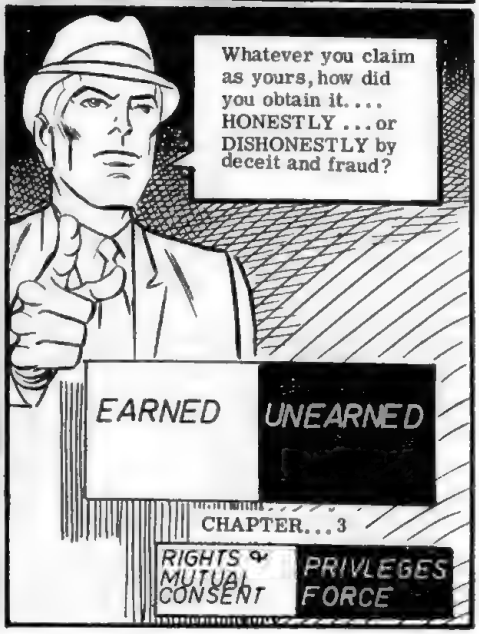
You have been playing dirty with justice. You'll find out what you really "earned".

Whatever you claim as yours, how did you obtain it.... HONESTLY ... or DISHONESTLY by deceit and fraud?

EARNED | UNEARNED

CHAPTER...3

RIGHTS & MUTUAL CONSENT | PRIVLEGES FORCE



Mr. A. by Ditko

Chapter... 3

MUTUAL CONSENT | FORCE

Who cares about your CONSENT or your RIGHTS! We're TAKING what we have NO right to take because we have the means... FORCE!

FORCE is "law" protecting the "special privileged". The NON-privileged deserve to suffer, the resisters of force deserve to be punished. It is only fair that YOUR fate be decided by the "privileged". FORCE IS RIGHT!

FORCE works for bad goverments, dictators. They pass "laws" giving certain people "RIGHTS" no one else is permitted. It doesn't work for local criminals. It is "LEGAL" only when the victim is the nation's population.

Hypocrites! It's legal to take by FORCE when it's for some phoney "good for everyone", but illegal when I want to ROB for MY OWN good. WHY? Either way the guys getting robbed don't have any choice about "giving", even if their property is going to be used against their own beliefs or good. At least I don't claim I'm ROBBING for "everyone's good".

I got RIGHTS! You got to treat me like I'm a decent human being. You want to abuse me.

I want you to get what you rightly deserve, no MORE and no LESS. Are you mixed up with Slung?

Stop FORCING your insulting questions! By what RIGHT...!

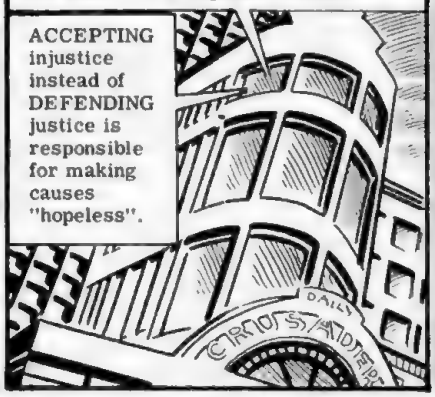
No one is forced to listen or answer. Ask Ken yourself if you're not afraid of the responsibility of learning and upholding the truth.

You can't FORCE me to give Ken any THIRD-DEGREE and I won't let you grill him.

I wouldn't force anyone to save himself. I'll help the deserving, the rest of of you are on your own.

So you're right, Graine, SO WHAT! There's no protection from FORCE especially when used by people with political pull. SPECIAL PRIVILEGES MEANS SPECIAL PROTECTION! Don't look for trouble... just report it, when and like it happened... unless it involves the "PRIVILGED"... then just FORGET IT. I'm a publisher, not a defender of the RIGHT... of hopeless causes.

ACCEPTING injustice instead of DEFENDING justice is responsible for making causes "hopeless".



If some men have MORE "rights", other men must have LESS and MUTUAL CONSENT is not required in dealings between men. Then there is no limit to the demands and the suffering that the "more" will FORCE on the "less" as their "privileged RIGHT.

MUTUAL CONSENT | FORCE

Chapter... 4

INITIATION OF FORCE | RETALIATION TO FORCE

Mr. A. by Ditko

Chapter...4

INITIATION OF FORCE

RETALIATION TO FORCE

We're TAKING over the country, SILENCE all who RESIST.

Confiscate private property, wealth. They stole it from those who never owned anything. Whatever belonged to someone in particular now belongs to everybody, to no one in particular.

Dictatorship, recognized by FREE world, now a U. N. member, pledges to join in struggle for human rights and freedom for all mankind.

Humanitarians claim; internal affairs of dictatorships a private matter, opponents of dictator are "war-mongers", defenders of individual rights are a threat to world peace.

Your property RIGHTFULLY belongs to us.

STOP!

Go to HELL, FASCIST PIG!

It's UNFAIR! "Innocent" VIOLATORS of other's rights and "harmless" INITIATORS of FORCE are the "victims of BRUTALITY and VIOLENCE by the country's legally liscensed law enforcement agency, the POLICE.

The police have NO "right" to do their sworn duty to uphold the laws of the land, but any man has the "RIGHT" to break laws without being treated like a lawbreaker.

Hold him! You talked to Graine. The only way to make a guy stay in line when he thinks he's FREE to act on his own without someones PERMISSION... lay down the "law", USE FORCE!

LET ME GO! I got my RIGHTS!

You ASKED for this violence. FORCE decides rights. It GIVES them and it TAKES them away.

The INITIATORS of FORCE are the only ones who ASK for and DESERVE violence.

You invite retaliation by your starting the use of FORCE, you're answered by your own chosen method of PERSUASION.

NO force, NO retaliation. Refuse to deal by consent and you wind up with violence. Force is NOT a right, self-defense IS.

I'm still in the clear. You can't pin anything on me.

I don't have to, you'll do it to yourself by continuing your corrupt policies.

INITIATORS of FORCE have abandoned their minds, reason and rights. Since they choose to act like wild beasts, they should be treated like beasts.

INITIATION OF FORCE

RETALIATION TO FORCE

Chapter...5

SEEKING THE TRUTH

EVASION

Mr. A. Ditko

Chapter...5

SEEKING THE TRUTH — EVASION

Ken, you LIED to me. These watches I found in your room were STOLEN!

NO! I SWEAR it! GRAINE...HE PLANTED them to FRAME me.

I wouldn't lie to the only man who's been good to me. You know Graines out to get me...and YOU. He's JEALOUS of your social prestige and HATES your decency and compassion. If he can turn you against me, HE'S FIXED BOTH OF US.

But would Graine stoop to a frame?

WHY NOT! Is Graine ALL pure, me and you ALL rotten? You didn't believe his testimony at my trial or his views on your humanitarian efforts, how can now believe he's not capable of playing dirty, of doing ANYTHING to get the UPPER-HAND over YOU. And could YOU expect any MERCY from Graine?

Graine IS heartless! He always makes me feel UNCLEAN for helping society's victims. Who WOULD help me if Graine..

I CAN'T be wrong about Ken's basic good. He wouldn't betray my trust but Graine is without pity. He wants to see me..US suffer...so he's capable of anything. Graine's kind are the cause of society's inhumanity. He MUST NOT be allowed to poison my feelings and weaken my faith.

Graine's tactics won't turn me against you, Ken, just keep on being a good boy.

That weasling, self-blinding FOOL won't allow himself to face up to the REAL truth about me, Graine, society or himself. He closes his mind to everything that threatens his illusions. My word becomes his proof, his truth. It enables him to escape facing up to whether it's true that I stole. But he has to blindly accept Graines guilt and my innocence, to denounce him and praise me on FAITH.

There's proof Ken's mixed up with Sl..

OH, GOD, SHUT UP! I WON'T believe your trumped-up "proof" and smears. You...YOU FIEND

HAVE PITY! STOP PERSECUTING!... LEAVE EVERYTHING BE..DON'T LOOK FOR FLAWS..DON'T CONDEMN. WHY CAN'T YOU FORGIVE..HELP..WHY MUST YOU INSIST ON PROVING ANYTHING?..IT CAN ONLY HURT...

Are you pleading for YOU or Ken? Saving begins when you face up to the truth, NO EVASIONS, then acting accordingly.

I..I..WE'VE done NO wrong. WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT? If society is good..EVERYONE will be good. Society IS to blame, it's BAD.

..if an enviroment is good..people will be good..but first we need a good enviroment...

HOW does a society that is just a collection of individuals GET to be bad? HOW does a society GET the power to make you KNOW and ACCEPT the truth, to KNOW and REJECT lies?

REFUSING to see or to know the truth does not make the truth non-existent. You cannot prevent a disaster by refusing to identify the signs of danger. YOU ONLY INVITE DESTRUCTION.

SEEKING THE TRUTH — EVASION

Chapter..6

GOOD — CORRUPTION — EVIL

Mr. A.

S. Ditko

Chapter... 6

GOOD CORRUPT EVIL

Lyner had me COLD, but he was only too glad to believe Graine is the villian. We're in the clear.

YOU IDIOT! Lyner's unstable. Graine is bound to shake him up enough to foul us up somehow.

Before that can happen, you're going to FIX Lyner for good.

ME--KILL--! NO! I CAN'T... OWWW

No one will suspect YOU, Lyner's prize example of a "good" kid SAVED from the clutches of an evil enviroment.

But MURDER! I..I don't want to go THAT far. PLEASE Slung, don't ask me to k..k..

You got a choice..he dies or YOU die! You're both weak links to me. You'll never be able to rat on me if I'm holding a murder rap over you.

Oh, God, WHY me? HOW did I ever get into this?

Go ahead, let him have it.

It's NOT MY fault..WHY did society FAIL me!?

My God, NO, Ken! THINK of what you're DOING..what it MEANS...what the CONSEQUENCES will be! THINK...THINK..

PLEASE, I saved you, I had FAITH in you...it's UNJUST.

QUIT STALLING! Shut off his whining.

ME....a KILLER..
..wait..

HOLD IT, BOTH of you! WHO'S gonna give me the BEST deal if I let him LIVE?

You DOUBLE-CROSSER!

I..I WILL, Ken, I SWEAR TO GOD I WILL!

I'll cut you in..a PARTNERSHIP!

HE'LL double cross you, KILL you the first chance he gets. ONLY I CAN PROTECT YOU!...K. KILL Slung!

CORRUPTION is the act of choosing EVIL over GOOD...of deliberately defiling oneself!

GOOD CORRUPT EVIL

Chapter..7

GOOD EVIL

Mr.A.
S. Ditko
Chapter...7
GOOD
EVIL
Yeh, you gotta die Slung, first chance you got YOU'D WIPE ME OUT!
NO, I SWEAR I WON'T!
You PUSHED me into this, it's all YOUR fault! And you, Lyner, do as I say OR ELSE...
S..Sure Ken, I'm still on YOUR SIDE! You STILL CAN'T help what you are doing...
You tied Slung okay, Lyner, now DUMP him. You're in this ALL THE WAY!
Oh, God, I had NO CHOICE! It's NOT MY fault. WHY didn't society lock up Slung.? He was a criminal.
Now we'll PROTECT each other, RIGHT. You see that I'm provided for and I'll see that you keep a spotless social image. I need some dough, you killed off my means of support.
I'll NEVER be free of his BLEEDING GRIP...untill...he's..d..DEAD... i..i..I'VE GOT TO KILL HIM...!
WITHOUT victims, the evil MUST devour ONE ANOTHER.
MR. A.! He SAW it ALL!
It's NOT our fault, Slung gave us NO CHOICE! Slung was a viscious criminal...rotten...EVIL!
If it is TRUE as you say that you got rid of an evil then WHY does my presence terrify you? Or is it your PAST corruption and your INTENDED evil acts that CAUSE you to react so fearfully to JUSTICE!
k..kill him...
i..i..can't.. y..you kill him..
HA!HA!HA! You cannot run away from your IDENITY. Wherever you are..you will BE what you are and YOU WILL KNOW IT!
... he'll never let us get away....
..why did I ever get mixed up with you..
You'll NEVER escape from the TRUTH..
or from PAYING for your BETRAYAL of the good.
why didn't SOMEONE save me from this..
the enviroment..society DID THIS to me....
Sooner or later the corrupt find, for them, there is NO TURNING BACK. They are trapped in evil, being dragged toward the ONLY end possible..... DESTRUCTION!
GOOD
EVIL
Chapter...8
LIFE
DEATH

Mr. A.

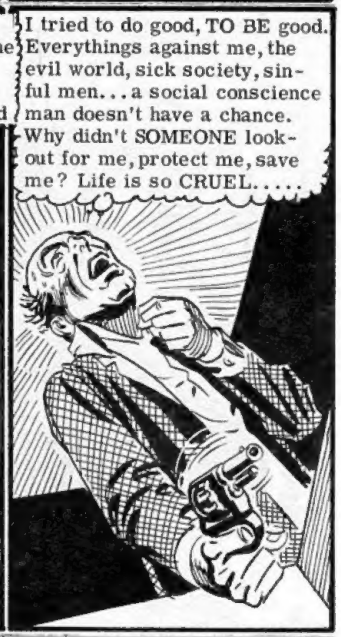
S. Ditko

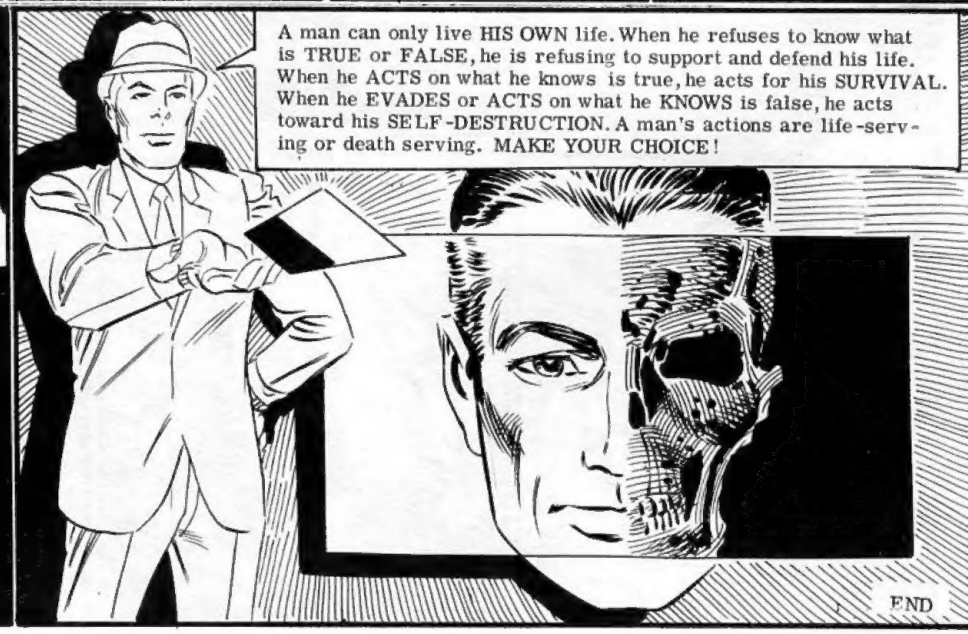
Chapter... 8

LIFE DEATH

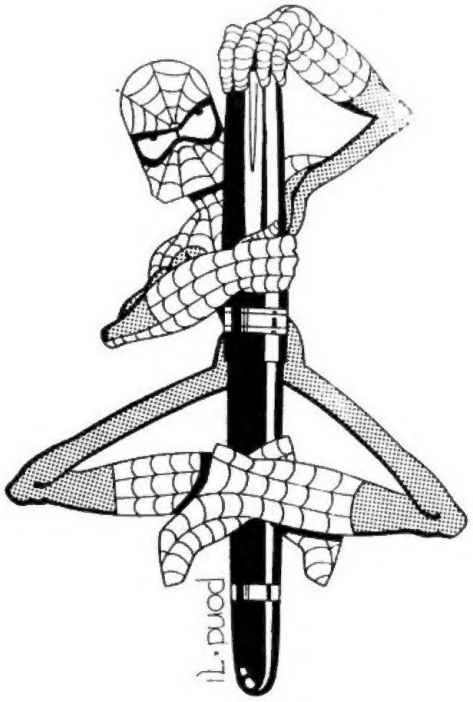
..can't escape.. MR. A. is a CURSE!.. I.. I know I've done evil.. I DESERVE justice.. I.. SHOULDN'T expect forgiveness mercy.. BUT I WANT IT!.. I WANT to FEEL and to be HELD as good.. GOOD.. good.. g...

IT'S UNFAIR! WHY should my evil matter? I still believe in the good... rotten Ken .. Slung... enviroment.. I.. I didn't have a chance... DOOMED.. Im doomed


I tried to do good, TO BE good. Everythings against me, the evil world, sick society, sinful men... a social conscience man doesn't have a chance. Why didn't SOMEONE look-out for me, protect me, save me? Life is so CRUEL.....


A man can only live HIS OWN life. When he refuses to know what is TRUE or FALSE, he is refusing to support and defend his life. When he ACTS on what he knows is true, he acts for his SURVIVAL. When he EVADES or ACTS on what he KNOWS is false, he acts toward his SELF-DESTRUCTION. A man's actions are life-serving or death serving. MAKE YOUR CHOICE!
END

From the Circular File



JAMES BRANDON
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At first I didn't like the cover of Comic Crusader #12, but the more I looked at it the better it looked. It was really appropriate for the issue. The inside front cover was liked the first time I saw it. Dave Cockrum is a fantastic artist. The art on the editorial page, by Stillwell, may have been the best in the whole issue. More fantastic art from Jim Steranko. Boy, he draws fine looking women! Tom Fagan's article was very well received. Your illoes were very good, too. I have yet to read an article by Fagan that I haven't liked, but this is the best he has written since Airboy. I don't usually like satiracal strips, but "Nolan" had me howling before I got half way through. Dennis's art was superb. I liked the outfit he gave to Cookie. Wrightson's art was only fair. It didn't seem as good as some of his other work. The only thing the matter with "Conan" by Tony Isabella was that he made Conan act more like a child than a man. "A Happy Accident" by Bob Cosgrove was good if you were a really big Tarzan fan. I'm not! I think ERB's best creation is John Carter. I didn't like Foreign Fan-Fare. The reason is because I don't know anything about the artist mentioned. I think if you put a lot of the artists work in the article, it would help. I read your article on The Eclipse in Issue 6, but he didn't sound all that great and I don't like Foss' recent work, so I didn't think I would like the story. Boy was I wrong! His art was better than it is on his other character Excel. The art didn't look quite as rushed as it usually does. The story was superb. I wish he would concentrate more on Eclipse than Excel. Foss uses Excel to show the fans his views about the world. Unfortunately, this takes away from the entertainment. Try to get more stories about Eclipse. Maybe as a regular strip to alternate with The Defender. I didn't care for the Buscema - Sinnott art. I'm glad to see the letter column back to normal. The back cover was only fair. I don't like Gar's style.

I HAVE TO AGREE WITH YOU ON YOUR OPINION OF JOHN CARTER! HE'S MY FAVORITE ERB CHARACTER TOO! YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE ARTIST FEATURED IN FOREIGN FAN-FARE? DID YOU READ THE ARTICLE? THE PURPOSE OF FFF IS TO GIVE READERS INFO ON THE TREMENDOUS TALENT OF THE FOREIGN ARTISTS. THE ART PRINTED WAS VERY REPRESENTATIVE OF CARLOS GIMENEZ'S WORK. I'D LOVE TO HAVE MORE ECLIPSE STORIES, BUT RONN ISN'T TOO WILD ABOUT DOING LONG UNDERWEAR CHARACTERS, AS HE CALLS THEM. JIM GARRISON WAS THE BACK COVER ARTIST LAST ISSUE. MOST OF THE FANS WHO WROTE IN LIKED HIS RATHER DIFFERENT STYLE.

DAVID DONOVAN
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Comic Crusader #12 was B-A-D, especially The Eclipse! Maybe some people like that perverted crap, but not me! One thing really puzzled me, though. That article by Tom Fagan -- What's this about his "yet unsolved disappearance?" I've never heard anything about it!

DRAT! BECAUSE OF YOU, I LOST A BET I HAD WITH TOM. HE SAID SOME FAN WAS BOUND TO WRITE IN, NOT KNOWING HE WAS COMBINING A "FICTION PIECE" WITH A FACTUAL ARTICLE, AND ASK ABOUT HIS MYSTERIOUS DISSAPEARANCE. I SAID "NO" NO ONE COULD BE THAT NAIVE. OH WELL, YOU WIN SOME - YOU LOSE SOME!

LAURINE WHITE
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I didn't think you could top issue #11, but you sure tried. The picture by Stillwell is the best by him I've seen so far. Elric is the only recognizable character in it. The Steranko is magnificent! Tom Fagan's article is much more informative than the one in All In Color For A Dime about the Lost World. Your illustrations were very good, but the one with Hunt, Lyssa and the Volta soldiers would have been better without Lyssa bouncing through the picture. Fujitake's strip on "Nolan" was really cute. The artwork for Conan and the Burroughs article was good. I almost thought Hogarth did that Tarzan. Thank you for including the comics in Spanish; I never can read the French ones in Phenix. Eclipse wasn't as good as the rest of the contents.

MANY OF THE THINGS PRINTED IN "ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME" ARE INACCURATE. BOTH TOM AND I PUT A LOT OF TIME AND MONEY INTO RESEARCHING THAT ARTICLE! LYSSA WASN'T BOUNCING - SHE WAS TURNING TO FLEE FROM THE VOLTA SOLDIER CLUTCHING AT HER.

JAMES HANLEY
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I just got Comic Crusader #12. Artistically it is much improved from the last issue, and that issue was really superb! Offbeat is the only word to describe Tom Fagan's Lost World piece. "Nolan" suffers by comparison with National Lampoon's recent "Norman." It does touch on some nice points. The gay Djin really psyched me. Isabella's article was, as always, good and eminently readable. I would have prefered to see him do a Wandering Fan article though. "A Happy Accident" was good, even if it did rehash a lot of articles I've seen before. The Eclipse was actually totally new to me. The concept is sound, but Foss' art leaves something to be desired. The Thorne interview was far too short. The Foreign article read nicely, but was not my cup of tea. I can't get involved with an artist on the basis of six illustrations.

I CAN'T COMMENT ON "NORMAN" SINCE I HAVEN'T SEEN THE PIECE. A WANDERING FAN ARTICLE WOULD HAVE BEEN OUT OF PLACE IN ISSUE #12. THE THORNE INTERVIEW MAY HAVE BEEN SHORT, BUT IT WAS LONG ON INFORMATION.

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